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Young Brown.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER VI.

GOOD FOR NOTHING.



WILLIAM Brown being deprived of his mate, went about very much like other young fellows in similar circumstances. He took to leaning against posts a good deal, and he who was once the blythest lad in all the country side began to mope and be idle. He could not settle down to anything. He did not know when to go to bed or when to get up. His occupation was gone, and with it all the zest and pleasure of life. A few days ago whatever he might be doing had some reference to her, and was mentally judged by her standard of comparison. If he was about any garden work he would think when he should have finished it that he might look in at Mrs.

Jinks's cottage and talk a bit with Sally. If he found a large gooseberry on a tree, or twin flowers on one stalk, or if he dug out a curious stone or an old coin (the inn garden had been a battle field in the Wars

of the Roses, and many such relics were turned up at odd times), he put them aside to shew her in the evening as a subject for conversation. When he took his reading lesson from Mr. Mowledy, he always tried to remember any narrative which made an impression on his mind in order to repeat it to her, and he had taught the girl to read and write a little herself. Now all this was over. If he worked in the garden it was mere digging with a spade or hoeing with a hoe. His readings were mere starings without purpose into a book. What he liked best was to lie down flat under a tree, with his head buried in his arms and think of Sally hour after hour in a day-dream. Then, as he could not sleep at night, but lie awake hot and feverish, he got up and wandered round the blacksmith's cottage that he might catch sight of Sally when she went out with her milk-pail early. But the second morning after he had devised this stratagem gaunt Harry himself, appeared with the pail and milked his cow in person. Sally had been packed off crying the afternoon before in the carrier's cart to pass a few months at Dronington with a silly old aunt who kept a small mercer's shop, and Willie saw her no more at Wakefield.

It was about this time too that the boy, grown reckless and rebellious against his elders, fell into indifferent company, and the miller told his friend the Curate that Sir Richard's head keeper was on the look out for him. It was a period of agricultural distress, and the stump oratory which arises out of it. There was a loud outcry against the Game Laws, and consequently a number of poachers about. They did not think the stealing of hares and pheasants criminal, but rather gloried in it among themselves. Young Brown, who was now generally mooning about the woods, fell in with some of these poachers, who were mostly pleasant adventurous fellows, and he felt a growing fancy for their society. One day the boy astonished his father by holding forth suddenly at dinner about "the rights of the people;" he did not understand in the least what he said, but he had caught the wild radical jargon of the time, as a parrot learns to swear.

The Curate noticed all these things with a heavy heart, for Mr. Mowledy loved the boy whom he fancied ought to have been his son, and might have been had events turned out otherwise than they had done. He understood only too well the cause of the change which had all at once come over the character and conduct of the well-conditioned boy whom he had taught so carefully; for silent and reserved as William Brown might be with every one else, he told his secret to the Curate very frankly. Mr. Mowledy even called upon the blacksmith, and felt his ground to see if it would bear a cautious step or two; but there is a notable difference between the Protestant clergy and their Roman Catholic brethren. The English pastor is jealously excluded from the private family affairs of his flock. He is a person connected with the Church and the Sunday coat, and must never be heard or listened to apart from them. It comes from the fact that our University bred clergy have little fellow feeling and less community of thought with the

peasantry ; whereas the Catholic clergy are often only peasants themselves, and feel and think with their own class.

The reverend gentleman having been therefore rebuffed rather rudely at the blacksmith's when he went to plead the cause of his young friend and fellow fisherman in a discreet way, so as to obtain time and favour for him, was wending his way disconsolately homeward, when he met Mr. Sharpe, with a leather bag in his hand, coming from the railway.

Mr. Sharpe had now all the affairs of Sir Richard Porteous and his brother in hand. He received the rents of the estate, cut down timber as fast as it was ready for the axe, and paid the Curate's stipend with somewhat more regularity than it had ever been paid before, though he deducted income tax which was not due upon it, and took off the price of a receipt stamp which he did not affix to the Curate's acknowledgment for the money ; and these were things which would never have occurred to the large and generous soul of Dr. Porteous. On the contrary, whenever that polished member of the superior clergy had felt the necessity of deducting anything from his curate's stipend, he had preferred to retain the whole of it in his own hands rather than bring his gentlemanly mind down to the consideration of vulgar fractions, with his "Reverend friend and colleague," as he courteously called his subordinate at such times. On the whole, however, the Curate preferred the less polite, but more business-like practice of Mr. Sharpe, and regular payments on the one hand, unresisting submission to petty peculation on the other, had gradually established between them a satisfactory state of affairs, which looked almost like friendship at a little distance. Certainly they both wished each other well : the Curate because he never wished ill to any living thing (except worms, which he had schooled himself to impale on philanthropic principles), and Mr. Sharpe because there really was no reason why he should go out of his way to do the Curate an ill turn while it was more convenient and respectable to be on good terms with him ; and Mr. Sharpe was too shrewd a gentleman not to understand the value of a blameless clergyman's good will.

It was not that Mr. Mowledy did not see through him. A reverend gentleman who was once stroke in his college eight, and a junior student of Christchurch, Oxford, cannot altogether forget the experiences of his youth. He knew very well that the lawyer was a rogue who cheated him of a few shillings every quarter ; but he also had worldly wisdom or charity enough (they are nearly the same qualities) to shut his eyes to the small robbery, and signed his name every three months to the strips of paper in duplicate which the attorney presented for his signature, as though he did not notice the figures upon them. Mr. Sharpe had sometimes an uneasy suspicion that the pale-faced scholar was not quite a fool, but he deadened his conscience with a few loud civil words as he pouched the trumpery theft. He was a fellow who did not look to see if there was mud upon a shilling when he picked it up.

"How de doo, Reverend gent ? how de do, sir ?" said Mr. Sharpe

heartily as they met, but though this dog seemed to bark honestly enough his eyes were shifty, and he was secretly ill at ease in a gentleman's company.

Mr. Mowledy answered with the mild good taste natural to him, though an almost imperceptible smile played for an instant about the corners of his mouth and then died away as though reproved by the presence of that august and beautiful charity which sat enthroned on the ample brow of this lowly priest.

Then Mr. Sharpe's mind turning instinctively to money as needs it must, reminded the Curate that to-morrow was "pay day."

"Nothing comes round so fast as pay day to the master, or so slow to the man," said Mr. Sharpe.

Mr. Mowledy internally acknowledged the justice of this delicate remark, for having lately had to pay his rent he had only two sovereigns left in his purse, and he was about to send off one of them as his annual contribution to the Bible Society, the only way he had of doing good with his small means, so he thought, and he trusted that the Eternal Master when he came might find his single talent well employed.

"Penny a pound more put on the income tax, Reverend Sir, which will make just one and threepence less this quarter on your account."

"Truly, a penny a pound deducted from fifteen pounds diminishes the sum by fifteen pence," answered the Curate, with a slight contraction of the brows more like an expression of pain than displeasure. He was involuntarily ashamed that a man with an immortal soul should be so base.

"Ah, your Reverence," said Mr. Sharpe, awkwardly trying to shift the load of his infamy on to other shoulders, "if I had my way I would knock off that tax on your income, and I told Dr. Porteous it was a shame to take it. But the doctor is terribly loose in his accounts, and he observed with considerable shrewdness that the value of the living is unquestionably more than the sum fixed by the Income Tax Commissioners for exemption, and therefore it was only right that you should pay your share of it."

"I am content to do so. I did not venture to make any observation on the subject."

"No, sir," replied Mr. Sharpe, "I cannot say you ever did either now or at any other time, but if you will allow me to make the remark, you looked as if you could say a good deal if you were inclined to do so. So could I, but Lord love you, sir, Dr. Porteous has got holes in both pockets."

"I am not aware that I referred to him," replied the Curate, unwilling to be betrayed into hearing one unkind word against his patron; and Mr. Sharpe having eased his mind of its difficulty about the one and threepence, consented cheerfully to change the conversation. His next words, however, startled Mr. Mowledy out of all self control.

"I've come down to Wakefield this fine afternoon, though I was not due till to-morrow" observed Mr. Sharpe cheerfully, "partly because I

was a little off my feed, and wanted some country air ; partly because I am going to take out a warrant against young Brown for poaching."

"A warrant!" echoed Mr. Mowledy, turning very pale. "Surely not. There is no harm in the boy. He is, merely a love-sick lad, who is idling about just now; but his parents are honest people and would not countenance his doing anything wrong, nor is the boy himself badly inclined."

"Humph!" mused Mr. Sharpe, pursing up his lips thoughtfully. "He has been seen with a set of radical chaps who go about snaring pheasants, wiring hares, and spouting sedition. That does not look much like a good boy, your Reverence."

"I admit, sir," replied the Curate with ill concealed anxiety, "that the boy's conduct for some weeks past has not been all I could desire: but I shall esteem it as a personal favour, a favour demanding no ordinary gratitude, if you will show him indulgence on this occasion, and accept my assurance that he will never offend again."

"Ah, that is all very well, your Reverence, but pheasants are selling at 3s. 6d. a head in London, and Sir Richard's estate is very much embarrassed. Now as every acre of it is entailed, and we cannot get hold of the next heir-at-law should he survive the doctor, we must not cut off the entail or sell a foot of ground, so we are obliged to make the most of all the produce for the creditors' sake. I'm trying now to let off the farms at nominal rents, on long leases, with fines, or what we Londoners call premiums, on entering into possession. They tell me the land will suffer, and the farmers will take all they can out of it and put nothing in, but I can't help that. We must make what we can out of it during Sir Richard's life, which ain't worth much I hear; we shall never get a sixpence afterwards, beyond his insurances. So I've had the pheasants numbered, and there are six-and-twenty missing this week."

"If the value of a few birds recently missed from the preserves will induce you to act leniently by the boy Brown, will you kindly permit me to ask you to be so good as to deduct it from the stipend which is coming to me to-morrow," urged the Curate, entreatingly.

"Well, your Reverence, business is business," replied Mr. Sharpe, "but if I let him off this time he will be at it again; and then you know if you don't pay the damage I must."

"Nay," pleaded the poor parson, "I will take care that whoever poaches on Sir Richard's preserves, William Brown shall not do so. I will make him promise me to refrain, if he has ever been guilty of this offence in pursuit of sport rather than from the desire of gain; and I know I can rely on his word."

"Twenty-six pheasants at three shillings and sixpence a head makes just four pounds eleven," remarked Mr. Sharpe, rapidly totting up some figures on his thumb-nail with a pencil, "and shall we say one pound nine for hares number unknown to make even money."

"That will make six pounds," said the Curate, wincing slightly.

"And I shall have just nine sovs. less the income-tax, to pay your Reverence," observed Mr. Sharpe, briskly.

They walked on together in silence for some minutes after this; and then Mr. Sharpe said good-humouredly but rather hardly. "Your Reverence seems to take an interest in young Brown."

"Yes," answered the Curate, "I do take a very great interest in him. He is a pupil of mine, and a lad of considerable promise. Upright, honest, bright witted, brave, and resolute; rather an uncommon character. He will, I think, make his mark in life."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Sharpe, and then he added meaningly, "Well, your Reverence, take a fool's advice, and keep the boy out of mischief. It isn't any particular business of mine just now to get him into trouble, indeed it is just possible that my interest may lie some day quite in a different direction, and I may find it suit me to do him a good turn. But there may be—mind, I do not say there are—several people who would not be sorry to see him got out of the way, and all his whole family too, for the matter of that."

"You amaze me," said the Curate. "I have lived here now many years, and I never knew them do harm to any one."

"Very likely," remarked Mr. Sharpe drily. "By the way, your Reverence, did you ever see any of the Duke of Courthope's people about here?"

"No," replied the Curate, very far indeed off the scent, for, like most single-minded and honest people, he was utterly guileless and unsuspecting. "Dr. Porteous mentioned to me, I remember, that his Grace had some interest in Sir Richard's estate."

"Oh no, he hasn't," returned Mr. Sharpe. "I bought up all the Bart.'s debts secured upon property or income ten years ago; and the Duke's solicitors had taken good care of him. They were a shrewd old firm—Messrs. Deodand and Mortmain. The Duke still employs them in conveyancing; and they had secured to him by a deed of assignment nearly the whole revenue of this rectory."

CHAPTER VII.

A RECRUIT.

THE Curate took leave of Mr. Sharpe on the mutual understanding that no more would be heard of the warrant against William Brown, and then he set off for a long walk into a neighbouring parish, where his brother curate was sick, in order to arrange some means by which he could perform double duty on the following Sunday without slight or injury to his own congregation.

As he walked his mind was rather bent upon secular than ecclesiastical matters. In the first place he could not conceive of the idea that any

one should seriously desire to injure such humble people as the Brown family, yet he had quite knowledge of the world enough to understand that a practical London solicitor like Mr. Sharpe would not be disposed to give him such a warning without sufficient reason, and as he loved the boy with all the yearning affection of a childless and lonely man, this warning made him very uneasy. He resolved to speak to Thomas Brown himself about it, and take counsel with that north countryman who was canny, though so silent; and notwithstanding the fact that he had never trusted himself alone in Madge's presence since they parted that winter's evening in the Glebe meadows, yet he thought he would speak to her now, and inquire if she knew or could guess at anything which would throw a light on this mystery.

He was walking on absorbed in these thoughts when his attention was attracted by a tall handsome man in the military uniform of a crack cavalry regiment. He had streamers of gayly-coloured ribbons in his forage cap; his buttons and spurs glittered like burnished silver. He carried a gilt-headed riding whip under his arm, and was a very fine fellow indeed. Three louts in smock frocks, also with ribbons in their hats stood near him, and one youth of a better class who sat with his head in his hands at the table of the road-side alehouse where they were assembled. These were recruits for her Majesty's service. In order to obtain them, the United Kingdom was at this period divided into districts in charge of recruiting officers who were gentlemen; but the actual enlistment of recruits was carried on by non-commissioned officers under them. The acceptance of a shilling from a recruiting sergeant as an earnest of the Queen's bounty, constituted an act of enlistment, and the practice of obtaining recruits at a public house, where the non-commissioned officer lied and got drunk freely for his country's good, was very general at that time; as it seems to be still. Indeed the system in full force was to catch bumpkins by the aid of flattery and strong drink; and then to tell them what was not true in order to prevent any attempt upon their part to escape. The non-commissioned officer got paid so much a head per bumpkin, and was frequently the expertest liar in his regiment. He was well aware that there were certain laws and acts of parliament against his merry proceedings, but he artfully contrived that they should remain a dead letter, by inventing the most marvellous narratives and keeping up a wonderful halo of deception in the bumpkin's mind, till he found himself fast fixed in uniform, with a sabre or a bayonet at his side.

Mr. Mowledy saw at a glance what had happened. The lad, who sat with his head bowed upon his hands at the alehouse table, was young Brown.

The Curate walked straight up to his pupil, and the dashing sergeant, at once recognising his profession by the straightly-cut black coat and white cravat which marks it so distinctly even in Protestant countries, stood up and saluted.

"William!" said the Curate, in a voice very firm but very gentle. "It is I, Mr. Mowledy, your friend. Look up and tell me what has happened."

The boy's shoulders shook as if he were sobbing, and he held his head tighter in his hands for some seconds, but when he looked up his eyes were quite dry, and he met the Curate's gaze steadily as one who felt he had nothing to be ashamed of, though his face was flushed and his lip trembled.

"What is your regiment, sergeant?" asked the Curate, in that unconscious tone of command which all English gentlemen adopt towards their inferiors in social rank; a tone which belongs to a people whose nobles are still powerful, a tone which is perhaps natural to all conquering races.

"The 1st Lancers, sir," answered the sergeant, saluting again from habit, and instinctively obeying the unexpressed order the gentleman had addressed to him.

"I am glad to hear it," replied the Curate, "and please to remember that I know your colonel, and that you will have to answer to me for this recruit. You are aware that he cannot be attested before a magistrate till twenty-four hours have elapsed from his enlistment."

"Quite aware of it, sir," replied the sergeant civilly, and he saluted again.

"Your head quarters are, I suppose, at Dronington?" continued the Curate, interrogating the sergeant as if he had been his commanding officer.

"Yes, sir," answered the sergeant, standing as straight as a dart in the attitude of attention.

"Thank you," said the Curate; then turning to young Brown, he said affectionately, "William, I shall see you again to-night."

CHAPTER VIII.

SO BE IT.

A FEW weeks before Mr. Mowledy would have been deeply and permanently grieved to see the bright lad he had educated sink into a common soldier. Even now he was surprised and shocked, perhaps also a little displeased, though the Curate was a patriot, and in an invasion or in any time of public trouble, would have shewn himself a worthy member of the church militant. But at the period at which this story has now arrived there existed an opinion among most respectable English persons that a military life was little better than penal servitude. In truth though officers in the army have always made a fine appearance at county balls, the trade of soldiering has never been very popular amongst us except when the tents of Napoleon Bonaparte were pitched within sight of the British coast at Boulogne. John Bull is not an imaginative old gentleman. It is no use telling him of a possible or probable danger; he laughs at it angrily or

contemptuously, according to his humour. But he understands peril when it is close to him, and he can see and feel it. Only shew him a band of robbers actually coming to look after his strong box, and at once he begins to feel a mighty respect for its defenders. At other times he is all for peace, retrenchment, and universal philanthropy; so he calls his soldiers man-butchers, and sneers with a wise far-sighted prudence at their drill and accoutrements. He even goes so far as to say that they are drones who eat up the produce of other men's labour. Wonderful elderly person, our mutual friend John, when he gives us a piece of his mind, and we are able to notice at our leisure that it is such a very different piece to that which he gave us yesterday.

Mr. Mowledy had a full share of the prejudices belonging to the generation and society in which he lived. He thought it a foolish thing for a young man of clear head and good character to enlist as a soldier; and unconsciously following a peculiarly English mode of reasoning, he considered it not only social degradation for a village innkeeper's son to become a British warrior, but also he was of opinion that to march about a barrack yard in goose step was the business of a human gander, simply because there was neither money nor credit to be got out of it.

Circumstances, however, proverbially alter cases. William Brown, a quiet, well-conducted lad, reading, writing, cyphering, and doing his duty in an unobtrusive way, with prosperity in prospect, was a very different person to William Brown the companion of doubtful associates, and with a warrant out against him for poaching. Mr. Mowledy did not think that his friend was guilty on this count, nor was he; still it is an awkward thing to fall under suspicion, and a Justice of the Peace with a proper respect for the Game Laws would not weigh too nicely the question whether he was innocent or culpable, but would commit him to prison as a wholesome warning to the country round. It was a critical period in the boy's life; he had been crossed in love; he might do something foolish in desperation or recklessness, and drift on from bad to worse. Upon the whole therefore, it would not be a bad thing if he was put for a few years under strict discipline. No harm was likely to happen to him that way, and much good. Moreover, Colonel Oakes, one of the best soldiers and gentlemen who ever sat in a cavalry saddle, commanded the 1st Lancers, and Colonel Oakes was an old schoolfellow of Mr. Mowledy. The Curate knew that a few lines to him would secure the boy a good reception in the regiment, and a friend at head-quarters, advantages which he would very likely turn to satisfactory account, and—who could tell—perhaps things after all had turned out for the best, as they commonly do if we put a smiling face on them.

So Mr. Mowledy having settled matters satisfactorily with his colleague in the next parish, walked rapidly back to Wakefield with those long sliding strides which cover so much ground and which are, I think, peculiar to the clerical profession.

He broke the news with instinctive delicacy to Madge, and sat down

to talk with her for the first time during seventeen long years. Her husband was out doing some field work, and the Curate found himself alone with that old unspoken love, now purified from all that was earthly in it, still busy at his heart. She heard his tidings silently, and one large tear stole down her pale cheek, and dropped furtively upon her work, but she offered no opposition to her son's conduct; and the Curate, who had that fine sense of observation which arises from Catholic sympathy with all that is best in the human heart, soon discerned that she was proud of the manly resolution her boy had taken. All women have a strong spice of romance in them; and a natural admiration for courage and adventure; they have never quite taken the commercial view of soldiering; and Mrs. Brown secretly thought it was a right and appropriate ending to a disappointed love affair. She would willingly have killed the blacksmith; she had a spiteful vindictive feeling against Sarah Jinks, who might, she believed, have managed her affairs more cleverly and kept them out of sight, but as the thing was done and over, she could not bear to see her son go about so dejected and woebegone. She would be glad to know he wore a red coat and was winning hearts elsewhere. She would feel a fierce joy in being able to say to the blacksmith, when next he sent over for her son to help him shoe a light-heeled horse, that he was gone for a soldier, and if the blacksmith wanted him now he must ask the Queen herself for him; and that he should have thought of this before, and to pour upon the clumsy shamefaced fellow, whose rough kindly nature she knew she could wound so easily, a deluge of feminine invectives, a phial full of the very vitriol of that condensed wrath which burns into the flesh without noise or explosion.

When Tom Brown, her husband was informed of what had happened, he did not like it at all. The hay had to be stacked, the potatoes to be dug, the fruit in the garden to be gathered and stored. William was his right-hand man, and he did not see at first how to get on in the absence of the strong willing arms which had never seemed to weary in their work till lately. It is strange, but nevertheless it is quite true to add also that he, Tom Brown, the father of this seven months' child, could not get rid of the fancy that he was a discharged servant, and he was privately apprehensive that he must have done something wrong or disrespectful towards his son or the boy would not have gone away from him.

The flaxen-headed cherry-cheeked lads and lasses who made up the rest of the Brown family likewise received the intelligence of this event after their own fashion, and set up a prolonged howl as soon as the information reached them; but dried their eyes and hushed their wailings when a general distribution of gooseberry jam was made to comfort them by their mother. Jack, however, a sturdy heavy breeched boy of twelve, sidled surlily up to his mother and plucked her by the apron stealthily. She stooped down to hear his childish secret, and the boy blubbered in a whisper half choked by emotion, "Oi wants fur tubbee a sojer tew wi ower Willie."

CHAPTER IX.

THE TEN POUND NOTE.

NEXT morning Mrs. Brown was very busy up-stairs putting her son's things in order, and getting them ready to send after him to the depôt of his regiment, whither the Curate had promised to convey them as soon as they were packed. There was a good deal to do for him, boys wear out their clothes so fast, and the thrifty woman put aside everything that wanted mending, and everything that he might have outgrown, only choosing the finest and best of his shirts and stockings, that he might not be disgraced among his comrades, but make as creditable a figure as the rest of them. When did it ever happen that our womenkind were not more thoughtful for us than we are for ourselves? Having done all that was to be done, and packed her boy's box with a neatness to which only female hands can attain, the mother unlocked her own private drawer and took out the ten pound note which had been pressed into her hands by the stranger huntsman in return for the rose she had given him, as he was about to leave her for ever. The dried leaves of the poor dead flower, which had been wrapped in it so long, had left a stain upon it, and obliterated some of the marks on it, and it was but a soiled and crumpled piece of paper; but she knew its value now. She considered that this money belonged in a peculiar way to her son William, and as he was now going out into the world she was determined that a part of it should be spent in the purchase of such necessities as he wanted, and that she would send the remainder to him with a loving message by their stedfast friend the Curate. Mrs. Brown, however, did not well know how to account to her husband or her neighbours for the possession of this ten pound note. She could not get it changed at Wakefield, and if she attempted to change it at Dronington she would never hear the last of it. So she spread the ten pound note before her, and an unuttered prayer was probably in her mind as she sat down to think the matter out. She looked very serious, as we all do when alone, while she patiently revolved the subject in her mind for an hour or more. Ten pounds appeared to her so large a sum that she was afraid to send it intact lest it should lead her son into temptation, or perhaps get him into trouble. What explanation could she give to him as to the manner in which she had obtained so much money? She did not like to tell the truth, for reasons obvious enough. Her husband had never got over his feeling of aversion to that stranger who had come and gone in a few hours, and she was uneasy at the thought of mentioning his name to her son. There was only one way out of this embarrassment, and that was to go to London, and there, if all she had been told of the great city were true, she might change the ten pound note unobserved, and buy the few things she wanted much cheaper and better than at Dronington. She had been very much excited by

her son's departure : it was the only noteworthy event which had happened in her life since her marriage, and the mere idea of rapid motion and change of scene was a relief to her. She had been told that she might go to London in two hours and return in the same time, that would be four. It would take her an hour to walk to the nearest station, and an hour to walk back. She would want an hour in London to change her bank note and make her purchases. That would be just seven hours in all, and she counted them anxiously on her fingers. Well, that would be from nine o'clock in the morning till four in the afternoon, and her husband was going to market with Farmer Higginbottom to sell his calf on Friday, which was market day at Dronington. To-morrow was Friday, and to-morrow she could go to London unperceived while he was away, and be back before he returned ; for farmer Higginbottom was a thirsty and convivial soul, who never stirred from the Nag's Head tap-room after business was over, till he had only just time left to save the daylight, and drive home before it was quite dark. Mrs. Brown therefore calculated she could do all she had to do with several hours to spare, and she began to prepare for her journey by putting such things as would be needed during her absence within easy reach of her eldest daughter, a solemn blue-eyed matronly little body of fourteen years old, who was quite capable of giving her brothers and sisters a dinner of cold meat and hot potatoes without help from anybody.

Then she showed a very feminine quality. Having made up her mind to deceive her husband and family respecting her movements on the following day, she was unusually kind to them all, as if she were under the necessity of making them some amends for what she was about to do, though they would never know of it, and therefore could have no cause to grieve. She was unusually frank and open that afternoon, and had none of those harmless little family government secrets with her daughter about nothing, which make up the household life of women. On the contrary, she volunteered to say that she should go over to the old Manor House and drink tea with the housekeeper left in charge of it, because the housekeeper had become lame and could not get about, and because the housekeeper had some good laying hens, which perhaps she would exchange now she could not look after them for something more useful to her ; and because she herself would like a little change and a gossip with her neighbour this fine weather, and wanted the housekeeper, who was a Devonshire woman, to tell her how to clot cream, which she had heard was a good thing with stewed plums and sugar for the chest. Mrs. Brown had no end of reasons for doing that which she did not intend to do at all, and told them with a quaint and hearty good humour which looked like a demure revolt against her domestic duties, and a prim appeal for liberty. Her eldest daughter rallied her slyly on her new-born fancy for gadding ; and Tom Brown smiled, well pleased, behind his pipe, to see her bear the loss of her favourite son so bravely. She made such a soft serene air around her in the inn kitchen that summer afternoon that

the place and its inmates were transfigured by it; and years afterwards they all remembered it as one of those supremely happy days which stand out of our lives, and seem lit up by some stray rays of a light which shines from Heaven.

CHAPTER X.

TAKEN INTO CUSTODY.

So Mrs. Brown went to London and arrived in due course at the Paddington Station, having contrived to escape observation and enquiry so far. She was dressed in a clean cotton gown of a pretty pattern in fast colours which washed well, and had on, moreover, a long cloak and a neatly plaited cap, white as snow, and a coal-scuttle bonnet. She carried a large gingham umbrella in one hand, and a white market-basket with wide flaps in the other, ready for her purchases. She looked a homely decent body, and soon found herself in the Edgware Road, quite dazed by the roar and bustle of the traffic, which poured through it with a ceaseless and deafening sound. She did not think London a very large place, for she had seen that it comprised nothing but the Edgware Road and the streets adjacent. She noticed that it terminated in an archway, and what appeared to be a common at one end of this Edgware Road, and a mean open space at the other, for Bayswater, Kilburn, and the neighbouring suburbs were then unbuilt. She was, however, amazed and delighted at the beauty, variety, and splendour of the shops. If she had had any money of her own, she would have ventured on one of those surprisingly cheap and lovely dresses she saw for her eldest daughter, or at least upon a ribbon. In any case, she would remember some of the patterns which she admired, and both she and her daughter were handy with their needles. She stood looking intently at one shop window where a ready-made gown was exposed upon a wire model, which set it off to tantalising advantage, when one of the gallant shopmen, scenting a customer, came out and entered into conversation with her.

"Walk hin mum," said this Edgware Road Knight of the Yard-stick, who was a pushing young man, anxious for business. "We're sellink horf at han halarink sacrifice. Ladies dresses in that style mum, larst Pariss Fashings, nine and nine mum, we'll say nine shillinks to you, mum," urged the pushing young shopkeeper, who spoke through his nose.

"Oi baint a come fur tew buy a gownd, zur. I do want zum wooll'n zocks fur my son zur, nought but that," answered Mrs. Brown, blushing modestly, for the pushing young man was becoming a little too demonstrative in his attentions.

"Socks, mum. Step hin, mum. Stout men's, one and nine, is that your figgur, mum? Best stock of woollink goods hin the trade, mum. Walk hin, mum."

And Mrs. Brown walked in.

She was a very fair judge of the things she had come there to purchase, and soon perceived that, although the pushing young man might have the best stock of woollen goods in the trade, he was very wary of shewing them, for those offered for her inspection were slop-made things, half cotton, which would come all to pieces the first time they were washed. She did not know how to get away without buying something, or she would have left the shop as soon as she saw she could not find what she wanted there. But the shopkeeper and his assistants, and his young ladies with their assistants hemmed her in, and she could not escape from them. At last, hot, badgered, worried, and half ashamed of herself, yet having a woman's rooted aversion to part with her money without its worth, she asked for a ball of cotton and a paper of needles to mend her boys' things, thinking discreetly that she could not be cheated of very much in that bargain. One of the young ladies, and her immediate assistant, put up the needles and cotton in pink paper, and with a manner so august and condescending that Mrs. Brown (as many a duchess has been before her) felt positively flattered by it. Then she took out her ten pound note and offered it in payment for just sixpence halfpenny.

"Caash!" sneered the young lady.

"Kash!" echoed her assistant.

"Cash," said the cashier lower down. "Six and half, ten pounds," said the young ladies' assistant, going to the cashier's desk with the bank note.

The cashier turned the bank note about, looked through it, held it upside down, felt it between his finger and thumb, and finally tasted it.

Now the race of cashiers are pretty conversant with the fact that in nine cases out of ten bank-notes are paid into the Bank of England within something like three months of their issue; and this note of Mrs. Brown's was eighteen years old! Besides, from having been kept in a damp place, or from having been dropped or rubbed against something during its long sojourn at the Chequer's Inn, it had acquired a brownish black stain, which stain had fallen precisely on the number of the note, smudging two of the figures, and rendering them illegible. So the Cashier having tasted the note once, tasted it again, as if all the wisdom of his craft had settled on his tongue.

The pushing young man observing these proceedings, walked down the shop, eyed the Cashier through the bars of his pulpit-desk, and whispered, "Is it a plant, Mr. Codger? Note a flash 'un?"

"Well, I'm not haxactly sure it's a flash 'un," said Mr. Codger, holding the note up to the light again; "only, yer see, it's pretty nigh hateen years after date, an' that's a goodish time for a note to be out of the bank. Who tendered it?"

"Suspicious female, got up like a spectabul farmer's wife," answered the pushing young man, following the note in the experimental tests to which the wary Mr. Codger kept on subjecting it. "Thought there

was somethink queer about her ven she fust came hin. What's to be done?"

Mr. Codger stood up on the lowest bar of his high stool, and glanced down the shop to where Mrs. Brown's long cloak and coal-scuttle bonnet were absorbing the contemplations of the two young counter ladies attired in silk gowns, and engaged with reels of sarsnet. "Stop here," he said to the pushing young man, and going up to the suspicious customer, he said, looking at her fixedly, "This is a very old note, mum."

"Be it, zur," replied Mrs. Brown, who, ignoring what constituted old age in a bank-note, was puzzled by the observation, and reddened.

"Would you 'ave any objectshuns to give me your name and address, mum, and to write 'em at the back of this note?" proceeded Mr. Codger, who whipped a very sharp steel pen from behind his ear, and spoke in an accent that began to freeze.

Mrs. Brown coloured a deeper red, and as the blushes of countrywomen are strong of dye, her face resembled a brick fresh from the kiln. "Oi can't rite, zur," said she, fidgeting uncomfortably; and then growing suspicious in her turn, she added, "Wheerfour tew should oi rite? Giv' me my money plees zur, for I wants fur to go whoam."

Mr. Codger, mistaking a gesture she made with her hand for an attempt to clutch at the note, drew it rapidly out of her reach, and, with an imperceptible nod towards the door, which conveyed to a porter on duty there that he was not to let this customer with the coal-scuttle bonnet go out, he flustered back to his desk, and gabbled to the pushing young man, "'Spect it's a plant. She looks a rum 'un. If the note ain't bad, it's most likely been stole, and they've made hefforts to play tricks with the number, and ain't succeeded. Take it to Mr. Sloggood," saying which he handed the note to the pushing young man, who betook himself with it direct to one best known to him as "the Governor," who was reading a newspaper in a parlour sanctified by the word PRIVATE painted in black on the ground-glass door.

Mr. Sloggood was the senior partner in the firm Sloggood and Flim-say, who had the honour of trimming half the caps in the Edgware Road with ribbons of an inferior quality. Knowing much about sham wares, thanks to the enterprising sale of which during a quarter of a century, he was justified to boast of being a self-made man, Mr. Sloggood was naturally a fair judge of a bad note. He tasted this one as Mr. Codger had done, smelt it, and held it a foot from his nose, the better to scrutinise it through a pair of double eye-glasses, rimmed with tortoiseshell. Then with an emphatic nod, and deliberate expression, like that of a judge under a wig, he pronounced the note to be either a forged or a stolen one, "'pon his honour,"—which, by the by, was a small stake enough.

The upshot of this was that Mrs. Brown was requested to step into the parlour and receive her change, and after a minute's prefatory catechising by Mr. Sloggood, was confronted with a policeman, who had been

beckoned, and ushered in through the private entrance. This guardian of the peace entered with his shiny-roofed hat in his hand—the present tasteful helmet having not yet been invented—and he apostrophised Mrs. Brown roundly with, “Now then, old lady, what’s all this all about?”

He would not have said “old lady,” had Mrs. Brown’s bonnet and cloak been of Edgware Road instead of country make; nor would he have looked at her over his glazed stock as if he already took her guilt for granted. But when this strangely rustic customer backed into a corner of the parlour, glaring at Mr. Slopgood, the pushing young man and the policeman, with eyes distended to twice their size, there was a movement of retreat on the part of Mr. Slopgood and the pushing young man, who felt as if there were mischief brewing.

“Giv’ me my money,” faltered Madge, who understood nothing of the suspicions she had aroused, and fancied she had fallen into a trap set to rob her; “oi wants fur to go whoam—you zur, with the pooter buttons, tell ’em to giv’ me my change that oi be waiting for.” This was to the policeman; for the County Constabularies not being organised then as they are now, Madge had never seen a policeman in uniform, and the pewter-buttons only conveyed to her something of a military notion, and consequently of protection.

“Come, don’t be obstropolous,” said the policeman, conciliatingly. “We none of us want to do you ’arm. All as you’ve got to do is to tell us ’ow you became possessed of this ’ere note which this gemm’un, Mr. Slopgood, ’as reason to believe is stolen property. If you be a honest ’ooman, you can tell us who guv’ it surelie, and you’ll give us your own name and haddress too, which there ain’t no reason to be afeerd on if no crimes ’as been committed.”

“I’m a honest woman,” hoarsely replied Madge, whose heart heaved and whose nostrils dilated. She called for her money again, angrily, passionately, and barred the door through which the policeman had come, with her body, her basket, and her umbrella, as if for fear he should go out without seeing justice done her. But, perceiving that the policeman had taken the note from Mr. Slopgood and was examining it, she made a sudden dart to snatch it from him.

“Yah! would yer now!” cried that official, bringing his gloved fist down on her hand with a hard thud. “Come, come, none o’ that.”

“Keep the pease, plecceman, keep the pease,” chorussed Mr. Slopgood and the pushing young man, who were both half outside the door marked “Private” by this time, and some other pushing young men and some pushing young ladies, attracted by the noise, scampered up, and made a curious background of pushing faces behind Mr. Slopgood.

The policeman, appealed to by a respectable tradesman to keep the peace, and feeling angered on his own account at the grab made almost successfully at the bank-note, took out from his blue pockets a pair of handcuffs, and clumsily endeavoured to seize Madge by the wrists. She wrenched the instruments away from him in an instant, and put her back

against the wall, quivering in every limb with rage and shame. This was the first time in her whole life that any man had laid an assaulting hand on her, and she stood at bay like a wild cat, too agitated and pale to scream, or do aught but foam at the lips and glare. And now followed a sorry scene. Policeman X. 1000 was an honest fellow, but a dogged. Stung at the resistance offered by this woman, and feeling moreover that the public eye was upon him in the persons of Messrs. Slopgood and Co., he strode determinedly towards Madge, caught one of her arms as in a vice, and whisked her right round in such a way as almost to wrench her shoulder out of its socket. But he had no feeble woman from Tyburn slums to deal with. Quick and strong as country blood, Madge turned with her uplifted fist and struck her persecutor full on the face with the handcuffs. The blow brought a great spurt of blood from the man's unprepared nostrils, and, blinded by the blow, he gasped "Help!" and tottered back, fumbling savagely in his pocket for his truncheon. But this movement was his ruin: the handcuffs fell once, twice, thrice, again on his open face, crashing heavily, like hammers on a flattened nail, so that the policeman reeled, clung at the table to save himself, but dragged it down with him in his fall; for it was a slight table, and bore a decanter and tumbler of water, an inkstand, a plate of biscuits, the newspaper, a brass bound ledger, and a yellow poster, emblazoned—

SLOPGOOD, FLIMSAY AND CO.

SELLING OFF AT AN ALARMING SACRIFICE!

All these things served as a bed to Policeman X, and were soon copiously intermingled with his gore. And now it was remarkable to see the general stampede executed by Mr. Slopgood and the pushing young men, and the pushing young ladies; the latter uttering distracted squeals. The alarming sacrifice of Mr. Slopgood's wares was as nothing compared to the alarm of the pushing young men as they raced down the shop, bawling to one another to stop "that devil of a woman." The only person who made a moment's stand was the porter at the door, but descreying a head-long woman bearing down in his direction with a brandished umbrella, and something which his disturbed mind took for pistols, he thought better of it, and vanished into the road-way, where he set-to yelling "Perlice!" as loud as his lungs would permit. In another moment Madge was by his side in the street, clamouring in frenzied accents that she had been robbed and ill-used. Half the houses in the Edgware Road immediately emptied their tenants on to the pavement, sashes were thrown up and heads craned forth, ubiquitous boys rushed up hooting, a few cabs and an omnibus reined in and blocked up the circulation, and Madge continued to fill the air with her wailings. But not for long. The porter, emboldened by the presence of numbers, made a valiant move to secure Madge, and roared, "There's a bin murder!" Madge did nothing to escape him. She stopped short in her cries, staggered and dropped senseless in front of a hansom cab. She had burst a blood-vessel.

An hour later Madge was lying in the accidents ward of the nearest hospital, and a policeman, seated in a Windsor chair, mounted guard at the door of that ward. Meantime the bank-note business having been succinctly explained to an Inspector by Mr. Sloggood—who further was most magnificent in directing that Policeman X. 1000's bruised countenance should be embrocated on the premises regardless of expense—a constable was despatched to the Bank of England to consult the list of notes stopped in the course of the last eighteen years. The entertaining volume which forms this list being produced, it soon appeared that eighteen years before, a 10*l.* note, No. $\frac{A}{Z}$ 00012345 had been stopped, along with some others, at the request of one Jiddledubbin, a maker of wind instruments. Now as Madge's note was numbered $\frac{A}{Z}$ 000123 and bore two additional figures, which had been obliterated, it became clear to the intellect of the meanest policeman that the figures obliterated must be 45, and that Madge had consequently stolen this note eighteen years ago, or feloniously received it, well knowing it to be stolen. So the charge was duly entered on the station sheet as "being possessed of a stolen bank-note, without being able to give a satisfactory account of the same, and having of malice pre-pense beaten and assaulted Police Constable X. 1000, with intent to do him grievous bodily harm, the aforementioned beating being administered to the great grief, hurt, and scandal of the said Police Constable X. 1000, her Majesty's well-beloved liege." It is a comfort to add that this item was entered in a fine, bold hand, and that the Inspector having wiped his pen on the cuff of his coat, despatched a fresh constable to look up Jiddledubbin—who made the wind instruments—to the end that this Jiddledubbin, being triumphantly restored to the possession of his property, might learn that the police of his country neither slumber nor sleep, and bless the land where he was born.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

A FASHIONABLE WEDDING.

So Madge lay in the ward of a hospital, and on the charge sheet of a police-station. But whilst doctors and nurses are restoring her to consciousness in order that she may be in a fit state of body to face the accusation of having robbed Mr. Jiddledubbin, let us revert to the nobleman who was the primary cause of all this—the stranger who made his brief appearance at the Chequers Inn that rainy night eighteen years ago, and vanished like a shooting-star.

On the same day and at the same hour—such things will happen—that Madge was married to Thomas Brown, ostler, in the parish church of

Wakefield-in-the-Marsh, a very different sort of marriage ceremony was performed in London. His Grace the Duke of Courthope and Revel was united, or in the more respectful newspaper language of the day, his Grace led to the hymeneal altar the Lady Helena Pomona Cardwell, daughter and sole heiress of the celebrated and Right Honourable Sir Job Borroughs Whitworth Placard Cardwell, Marquis of Newcomen and Knight of St. Patrick. His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury politely absolved the noble Duke from the necessity of repairing with his illustrious consort to a cold, damp church upon a winter's morning, and granted a special license under his high dispensing signature as Lord Primate of the realm. By virtue of this courtly and graceful document the Right Reverend Dr. Simonet Tythe, Bishop of Selsole-and-Man, who was descended from a family of French Huguenots, and the very Venerable Archdeacon Crorl, who was descended from himself, were enabled to administer the sacrament of matrimony after the most approved rules of politeness; and in a warm and comfortable manner at the Duke's mansion in town. It was an imposing building erected by Sir John Vanbrugh, and it stretched from one of the busiest parts of the Thames river and blocked up the way to one of the busiest parts of parliamentary London at Whitehall, and it was properly aired and heated for the marriage sacrament, which a church would hardly have been. There could be no doubt that a sacrament was administered in this agreeable way, for although the Protestant clergy have a trick of sneering at the sacred pretensions of marriage, which they probably derived from Martin Luther, yet the Roman Catholic Church very formally and precisely includes matrimony among its seven sacraments. Indeed, considering that the word sacrament is derived from the Latin *Sacramentum*, and we are still accustomed to speak sometimes of "the marriage oath," as a sacred thing, some persons are rather inclined to think that the Protestant church has dealt lightly in this matter. Moreover, there was no getting out of the fact that the Duke of Courthope's marriage was a sacrament, for although his Grace naturally inherited a belief in the orthodoxy of the established Church of England, yet the most noble Marquis of Newcomen had hereditary and political reasons equally strong for adhering to the Church of Rome, and the Lady Helena Pomona therefore naturally declared herself a Papist. It was upon that account his Eminence Clement Sylvester Cardinal Archbishop of Rouen, a friend and ally of the family, and Monsignor Digby, an English Jesuit, had looked rather coolly on this marriage at first, and had proposed to convert the Duke as an indispensable preliminary to it. But they had subsequently become reconciled to the inevitable, when Lord Newcomen, who, like most successful politicians, loved a compromise, assured them that married ladies generally have their own way, and that the Duke would probably be soon converted in the curtained and eloquent privacy of his wife's apartments. Ultimately, therefore, it came about that his Eminence the Cardinal consented to shew that he could be to the full as well bred, where a Duke was concerned, as his Grace the Lord Primate of England.

Something was courteously whispered about the extremely delicate health of the Lady Helena, who could attend three balls and dance eight hours every night of the season without inconvenience; and the muster of ecclesiastical dignitaries of both persuasions in their robes of honour at Revel House that day was extremely edifying.

The Archbishop of Rouen came over from France to attend the ceremony, and he and his Catholic clergy appeared to the most advantage, for a mere prim apron and silk stockings, however artistically made to display the rounded calf of a well-turned leg, or the plump majesty of a prelate's proportions below the chest, look neither so dignified or picturesque as the flowing robes, the priceless lace, the handsome cross and signet ring which gave pomp and splendour to the commanding presence of Archbishop Clement, the most famous orator and theologian of the Gallican Church.

There was almost regal state at Revel House that day, when the political and social interests of the two great names of Courthope and Newcomen, whose partizans divided the kingdom, were blended into one. There was not a gentleman of either family who did not feel that his chances of winning fame and distinction in the public service were strengthened by that alliance. The carriages which bore the wedding guests to breakfast, stretched in an unbroken line from Whitehall to Piccadilly; and there was not a single person in any one of them, from the veteran party leader to the bridesmaids' sisters in the fourth or fifth year of their teens, and the dashing, high-spirited young cornets and clerks—who had not something to hope or to fear from the Duke or the Marquis.

Lord Newcomen had been in the Ministry from time immemorial. He was a very clever nobleman, stout, good natured, of an easy temper. The Court liked him because he really would do anything he could to please a prince or princess, and liked to please them better than he liked to please other people. His colleagues approved him because he was not noisy or troublesome. He let them take as much fame and consume as much consequence as they pleased, so that they left him the substantial benefits of office—a crown lease now and then, a lord wardenship for himself, an unobtrusive sinecure for a friend or a relative. In return he gave good dinners for the party, kept open the pleasantest house in town, and was always ready to put the peers in a good humour by a few amusing after-dinner stories. His Lordship was indeed an invaluable man to his party, for he had no political opinions, and had never professed any. He was pledged to no course of action upon any subject; and he was popular among the people because he was the most affable and unaffected of men; a stout hearty-looking gentleman with full red cheeks, blue eyes, and short sand-coloured whiskers. Personal appearance has a great deal to do with popularity, and nobody could say that the Marquis was a fop or a sloven. He looked like a thriving cheesemonger, and his grandfather had actually been in that profitable branch of trade, till at the close of one of the longest lawsuits on record even for an Irish inheritance, it had suddenly

appeared that none of the claimants who had been contending for the property had anything to do with it, and that the rightful heir was Lord Newcomen's grandfather, old Jim McMurrrough or Borrough, who kept a shop in Sligo. Jim drank himself to death with joy; but, of course, his successor changed the family name in accordance with its ancient spelling and significance, as sanctioned by Sir Bernard Burke, and bloomed out as a full fledged ambassador. His son, the present Marquis, had been dandled into statesmanship on the knees of duchesses and princesses of the blood. He had ridden cock-horse on the walking sticks of kings and emperors. His father had turned opportunity to good account; he had increased the family property, paid off mortgages with the proceeds of early information, and purchased so much parliamentary influence in unsuspected places, that he could pull an incredible number of political check-strings without apparently moving foot or finger. The present marquis had stepped into this agreeable position at about five and twenty years old. He had married a charming French wife, and notwithstanding his bluff British aspect, he really looked upon the affairs of this world very much from a Parisian point of view. He laughed at men and columns, while he used and enjoyed them.

No wonder then that all the world of wealth and fashion were ready to come at his call, and that their promptitude was in no way diminished by the opportunity which arose on the present occasion of paying court to the rich powerful placeman and an authentic duke at the same time. His Grace, had he been consulted, would have liked to manage the thing more quietly, but the French Marchioness would not hear of it being done in a corner, and Lord Newcomen thought if it was done at all, it should be done well. His wife had made the match, being fascinated by the Duke's title, which was historical and familiar to her in many charming French novels. Lord Newcomen thought that as his daughter must be married to somebody, she might as well be Duchess of Courthope and Revel as not. He was rather staggered at the business arrangements suggested by Messrs. Mortmain and Feoff to his solicitors, Messrs. Plumbas and Dumbus; for the Duke required the whole amount of his wife's fortune to be paid down, whereas his Lordship was determined to tie up every penny under stringent settlements; but at last the thing was arranged by Lord Newcomen negotiating a loan through the Government broker with a Life Insurance Company which wanted a new charter, and was prepared to lend the Duke of Courthope a sum sufficient for his immediate necessities on the tacit understanding that they should get it.

Things having thus been settled to the satisfaction of everybody in good society, the wedding festival, as already said, was imposing in its state and magnificence. The company comprised the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Cabinet Ministers and ex-Ministers of both the great parties in the country, the Duke being nominally a Tory and the Marquis nominally a Whig; most of the proud old Catholic nobi-

lity who so seldom come abroad, all the well-connected bishops, deans, and canons of the High Church and the Broad Church, all the fine ladies and gentlemen who could beg, borrow, or win an invitation to be present. The Catholic portion of the marriage service was sung by some of the finest voices in Europe, imported from divers opera houses as the custom is. The gorgeous family plate and art treasures, collected by wealth and taste for countless generations were profusely displayed, and as the great folding-doors of the banqueting hall were flung open by the Duke's Chamberlain to his friends, the band of his Grace's old regiment, the Grenadier Guards, played them in amidst the blaze of diamonds, and the nodding of plumes on all the beauty and chivalry of the land.

Lord and Lady Newcomen received the wedding guests with the accomplished charm of a practised host and hostess; for our Duke and Duchess, in compliance with our English custom, left town immediately after breakfast for Beaumanoir, his Grace's place, in one of the Midland Counties, which Pope had called a wonder of the world.

There more rejoicings awaited them. Triumphal arches were erected with

“Our Young Duke, and Our Old Constitution,”

“Welcome HOME,”

“O. & H.,”

and other romantic and original devices inscribed upon them in flowers or coloured lamps. His Grace arrived in a carriage and four; his illustrious consort sat beside him, tall and upright as a wand, and the people loudly cheered them as they swept on to the stately castle gates of Beaumanoir, attended by a guard of honour composed of the County Yeomen. The park-keepers in their state liveries came forward to receive them, the ancient Norman church rung out a joyous peal from its time-honoured belfry, the militia band sprung into music on the lawn, and a salute was fired in the park. As they neared the castle gates, the Duke stood up and bowed repeatedly to the crowd. He was the same tall, gallant-looking gentleman who had slept at the Chequers Inn, and he was visible in the sight of hundreds as the perfect type and presentment of a great hereditary noble—the physical perfection of blood and race. Just then there was heard far above the bells and music, and above the roar of cannon, a wild shriek from a human heart which had broken, and a young woman, travel-stained, pale and haggard, fought her way through the throng, and flung herself in mad despair under the horses' feet. She was one of the numerous women of whose honour his Grace had made sport, but has nothing to do with our story farther than to illustrate that the Duke's marriage had its small cloud among so much sunshine. She was dragged away, a shapeless mass all huddled together; nobody paid any attention to the incident; the crowd closed round her, angry at the interruption, and thinking she was an impudent beggar. The carriage rolled rapidly on, and the Duke welcomed his wife to his ancestral home amidst deafening

huzzahs from his tenantry and dependants, as though he had done something great or good. But as the flag was hoisted on the battlements to announce his presence to the country round, and gave out its heavy folds to the wintry winds, it was remarked that his Grace looked a little unnerved, and that his hand trembled so that he could scarcely hold his hat in it. The newly-made Duchess looked at him with astonishment, and whispered in a rather crisp way she had learned from her mother, "*Mon ami, vous feriez mieux de vous retirer.*" Then she turned graciously to acknowledge the congratulations of the kinsfolk and retainers of the great house who had assembled to do her honour, while the Duke found a pretext to go to his dressing-room and drink a deep draught of wine before he reappeared again.

CHAPTER II.

THE DUCHESS OF COURTHOPE.

THE marriage which took place under such auspicious circumstances to all outward appearance was not a very happy match. The husband and wife did not quarrel. Persons in their rank of life have no need to do that, because they can so easily avoid each others' society; and the Duke of Courthope lived much apart from the Duchess. Indeed his Grace did not like the restraints of married life, and his wife constantly galled and vexed him. She was a bright, sarcastic French person, who took very decided views of things, and was obedient only to her confessor. She had rather a contempt for her husband when she came to know him. She thought him dull and heavy-witted compared with her father, and the brilliant diplomatists she had been accustomed to meet every evening round her mother's tea-table. She got into a habit of sneering quietly at him, and the Duke winced under her covert taunts as if they were barbed arrows which struck him in the face and breast. Perhaps she had her own reasons for having a poor opinion of him; who can pry into the secrets of married life? His Grace had very little conversation. He was accustomed to be amused and made much of. He had been always king of every company he entered, the bright particular star of any firmament in which he deigned to shine, and he soon found out that his wife despised him. First he was astonished, then angry; but at last her contempt rendered him sullen and indifferent.

About a year after their marriage a son and heir was born to them, and it seemed at first as though the strong link of an existence for which they were both responsible, and which was a part of their own lives, would have drawn them together. The Duchess certainly tried for a while to put a better face on things. She went singing about her nursery with her child in her arms, and tried to jest with her husband; but if there was one thing which his Grace could understand less than another it was a

joke. He was like most English noblemen of the highest rank—rather solemn, and had an excessive sense of his own importance. It irritated him to feel his moustaches pulled by merry fingers, and arms flung round his neck with screams of laughter, while a pair of dapper feet dangled half a yard from the ground, and clung to him. He liked to be made love to on hands and knees, and invited only toadies who flattered him, to his table. Madge, if she had had ever so little education, only just enough to speak and think in conventional English, would have fooled him to his heart's content. She would have made him supremely happy. He would have been faithful to her, because he would have found no such adulation elsewhere; he would have been proud of her, because she would have been so proud of him. He and Madge had the same tastes and pleasures; they both loved horses and dogs, coarse plain food, and a country life in the open air. Lady Helena had not a wish or an idea in common with him. She was light-headed and witty, he was pompous and dull, not so much by nature as by habits which had overgrown his instincts. She liked the life of drawing-rooms, books, poetry, music, the arts, and the perpetual whirl of society; he hated all these things. So at last they gave up all attempt to understand each other; and one day the Duke, stung beyond endurance by her taunts, let fall a threat of fearful import, telling her rudely and plainly that she was not his wife, and he stood up in his wrath and cursed her.

"I knew it," she answered with keen contempt, "and am only too glad that my boy is all my own. Tenez, M. le Duc, si vous êtes due—chose qui n'est pas trop sûre d'après ce que dit mon père. Vous êtes un lâche!" and she swept from the room, leaving his Grace livid with passion, and terrified by his own imprudence.

"Damn the wine!" he muttered fiercely, after she was gone; "if I had not drunk so much at the hunt dinner I should not have lost my temper. But never mind, my lady will forget it before morning, and at all events that old humbug, her father (who has done me so neatly), is too sensible to make a row."

His Grace was partly right in this view of the case, and partly wrong. The Duchess did not forget it all before morning. On the contrary, she passed a greater part of the night closeted with her confessor, a wise old man, who had known the wayward girl from her birth, and the next day, while his Grace was out shooting, she quietly returned with the priest to her own home, taking her infant son and his nurse with her. On the other hand, Lord Newcomen pooh-poohed the whole thing very pleasantly, and walked with the latest news on his lips into his wife's boudoir, giving her jocular orders to bring her Grace to her senses, and his wife, who loved and trusted and admired him, did as she was bid. Then he walked down to White's, where a telegram had assured him he should meet the Duke of Courthope, and they talked the matter over in the bow window, most agreeably.

Said the Duke: "I give your lordship my honour I am extremely

distressed at having huffed her Grace—but, egad, I must tell your lordship it was after dinner;” and the Duke smiled demurely. He did not wish to put a grave face upon the business.

“By the piper that played before Moses, as they say in my native country, the little vixen has got her back up, and there’s no getting it down, your Grace, for a day or two,” laughed the noble Marquis, who knew his daughter’s stubbornness upon a point of conscience where she was supported by the priesthood.

“I leave myself entirely in your lordship’s hands,” resumed the Duke, with a courteous bow.

Lord Newcomen bit his lip, and his brow darkened almost imperceptibly for a moment. “Is there any proof against you, if you don’t let the cat out of the bag to anyone else?” he asked suddenly. His lordship knew the value of a direct home question when least expected.

The Duke of Courthope flushed crimson, his lips moved once or twice with a painful spasm, but no sound came from them. He could not force himself to tell a direct lie, and at last overcoming his emotion by a strong effort, he blurted out, “By God, my Lord, I don’t know,” and then he bit his nether lip till the blood flowed.

Lord Newcomen looked very hard and keen when he heard this startling answer; and then said briefly, “Let me know the facts; perhaps I can tell you. What’s the woman’s name?”

“Zephirine Malvoisin.”

The Marquis nodded.

“The opera dancer?”

“No; her niece,” answered the Duke, not sorry to relieve himself of his terrible secret to a man so clear headed and expert in business as the Marquis.

“Where is the girl now?”

“She died in the county hospital shortly after my marriage?”

“Marriage!” echoed Lord Newcomen, with a slight tone of scorn, and raising his eyebrows; then remembering how much any manifestation of feeling impedes business, and renders a mutual understanding between gentlemen difficult or impossible, he asked with perfect politeness and good temper, “Any children, Duke?”

“Two, a boy and a girl,” answered his Grace, determined to make a clean breast of it.

“Where are they?”

“For the life and soul of me I cannot tell,” and the Duke, in mere nervous irritability and to give emphasis to his denial, rang the bell sharply, and asked the waiter for change for a sovereign.

Lord Newcomen looked out of the window and nodded to an acquaintance on the other side of the way till it was brought. He owed half his success in life to the fact that he never lost an opportunity of being civil.

“Do any of the women’s relatives know anything about it?” he asked, waiting patiently till the Duke had put up his change.

"Her brother does. He was present, but he put himself out of court by forging my name to a bill of exchange."

"Have you got the paper?"

"Oh, yes," said the Duke with a wry smile, which only moved one side of his mouth.

"Where is the man?"

"He lives at Rouen, and wrote me a bullying letter yesterday. I received it just as the hounds were about to throw off in my park."

"Let me see those papers," said Lord Newcomen quickly. "I mean the forgery and the begging letter."

"They are here," answered the Duke, recovering his pomposity. "I was about to place them in the hands of Mortmain, my solicitor, to protect me against that kind of impertinence."

Lord Newcomen looked at him out of the extreme corner of one eye, and he thought "Dolt," but he said, "No, no, Duke, leave this business to me. Lord Protocol, in Paris, owes something to me for having got him out of a scrape with an under-secretary at F. O. last year. I think we shall be able to give Monsieur Gontran de Malvoisin his choice between a vice-consulate in South America, on condition that he never returns, or the hulks at Toulon. It is quite immaterial to us which of the two he accepts, we must get rid of him."

The Duke brightened into extreme grandeur and dignity at this unexpected relief. He had great confidence in Lord Newcomen, and a well-founded faith in the occult powers of government when set in motion by competent hands. "Upon my soul I am monstrously obliged to your Lordship," said his Grace, extending his hand with great cordiality, but somehow or other the noble Marquis did not see it, and the Duke was obliged to withdraw his outstretched fingers untouched.

Lord Newcomen had sent for the Clergy List, and was now turning over its pages, with a very stern expression come back into his face. If he had chosen to say what it meant he might have told that he intended to drive the nail he had in hand well home, indifferent as to any fine feelings it might pierce on its way, or any sensitive nerves which might try to evade its point. With this purpose he was framing a few more questions. He never left business half done.

"Where did the marriage take place, Duke?"

"At Enghein," answered his Grace, wincing.

"Enghein!" mused Lord Newcomen. "Pooh! there's no consul or British chaplain at Enghein."

"I did not say there was," replied the Duke slyly.

"Why then, hang it, Duke, you were not married at all," exclaimed the Marquis, throwing himself back and laughing heartily. "A Catholic marriage don't count for anything except in Ireland—but stop, perhaps your private chaplain was one of the party?"

"Yes," said the Duke.

"Well, he didn't register, of course?"

"No," said the Duke.

"He won't peach, will he—I mean he is all right, you are on good terms with him? A chaplain is generally kept in order by his hopes or his fears."

"I am quite sure of him," said the Duke. "He is a gentleman; I have a tight grip on him."

"Name?" asked the Marquis.

"Dr. Porteous," answered the Duke readily.

"Well, Duke," observed Lord Newcomen, as he brought the interview to a close, "we may, I think, count on old Porteous. In the first place he is a gentleman and a man of honour, with a great admiration for his betters; he knows that whatever he might say no one would believe his word against yours, and that you would certainly contradict him; in the next place it would cost at least a hundred thousand pounds and about fifty years to dispute the succession to a dukedom with my grandson; it is not likely we shall be troubled by a beggarly French scene shifter and his brood. However, it may be as well to throttle him, and if ever you hear any more about the business come to me. Mortmain would only stir up trouble, while we as you know have plenty of ways of settling such things quietly among ourselves; and the foreign police are always civil if well handled through the right people.

CHAPTER III.

MARQUIS OF KINGSGEAR.

THE Duke of Courthope and Revel never did hear anything more of the business which had formed the topic of conversation between his Grace and Lord Newcomen. The noble Marquis, his discreet and business-like father-in-law, died in the ordinary course of events, leaving his title and entailed estates to be fought for between a shoemaker in Cork and a captain in the Indian army; both of whom were ruined in pocket and character by the litigation, just as a merchant seaman returned from Australia with an attorney behind him, and established his claim to govern a part of the British dominions by hereditary right, all wants of aptitude and education notwithstanding. The charming French Marchioness who had been the life of London society so long, died also. She caught cold, dowagering about with visiting cards, in an east wind; and a Yankee Bowery girl, whom the merchant seaman had met while on a spree ashore at New York, was the next Marchioness of Newcomen. She made a showy peeress of the realm; and had very tall footmen, who called out her name loudly upon drawing-room days, so that all St. James' Street might know what a fine coach and coachman she had. A good natured marchioness she was too, and would have given much more money than she did to public charities if the costs of the attorney who raised her to the peerage had not been so large; and her fortunes, had they anything

to do with this history, might be worth following. As it is they would lead us too far afield.

The bright-eyed Duchess of Courthope, who had married so grandly and so unhappily, fell into a low fever while superintending the preparations for her mother's funeral, and, last of all her family, she died also, leaving only one child, a son, of about twelve years' old, who had been her sole hope and darling in this world. His name was, among many other names, Bertran-Cardwell Wyldwyl; he was commonly called Marquis of Kingsgear, and he was undoubted heir to the titles and estates of Courthope and Revel, with the unentailed estates of Newcomen; though strange to say he was only mentioned in his mother's and grandfather's will as Bertran-Cardwell ("my beloved son or grandson"), his own family name of Wyldwyl and the titles which he wore by courtesy having been omitted evidently through the blunder of a conveyancer. "It was not even worth while to set the blunder right," said Mr. Mortmain, the confidential family solicitor of the Wyldwyls, to his chief clerk. "There is and can be no dispute about the person meant. The late duchess had only one son, and her father, the late marquis, had no other grandchild, whom he ever to my knowledge recognised."

"It is a curious mistake for Mr. Pynsent to have made, though, sir; isn't it?" observed the clerk, who had private suspicions of his own respecting the affair of Mr. Mortmain's clients. "Yes, it is, Mr. Copeland," answered his employer, fastening a steady glance on his subordinate, and both kept up the legal fiction of deceiving each other even in the recesses of their office, where there was no manner of occasion for double-dealing. So in due time honest Mr. Copeland rose to be a member of the firm, and it signed "Mortmain, Mortmain and Feoff" upon the briefs which it submitted for the opinion of counsel.

The Ringed Planet.

DURING the months of September, October, and November, Mars and Saturn are companions as evening stars. It will not be difficult to recognize them, though the ruddy glories of Mars have been greatly reduced since July and August, when he shared with Jupiter the dominion over the western skies after sunset. The dull yellow lustre of Saturn differs markedly from the red but more star-like light of Mars; and, as the two planets draw near to each other late in November (making their nearest approach on the 20th), it will be interesting to observe the contrast between the red and yellow planets of the solar system. Striking, however, as this contrast will be found to be, it is insignificant, compared with the real contrast which exists between the two planets. Mars is the least but one of the primary members of the solar family, and, although he pursues a course outside the earth's, he is unlike all the other superior planets in being unaccompanied by any moon; his small orb, also, appears to have but a shallow atmospheric envelope, while, in physical constitution, he apparently occupies a position between the earth and the moon. Saturn, on the other hand, is inferior only to Jupiter in dimensions and mass, while he is superior to Jupiter not only in the astronomical sense that he travels on a wider orbit, but in the extent and importance of the scheme over which he bears sway: his orb, moreover, like that of Jupiter, appears to be the scene of marvellous processes of change, implying a condition altogether unlike that of the earth on which we live.

We propose to give a brief sketch of what has been ascertained respecting this wonderful planet, the most beautiful telescopic object in the whole heavens, and the one which throws the clearest light upon the nature of the solar system and particularly of those giant planets which circle outside the zone of asteroids.

We would at the outset impress upon the reader the necessity of raising his thoughts above those feeble conceptions respecting Saturn and his system which are suggested by the ordinary pictures of the planet. When we see Saturn presented as a ball within a ring, or more carefully pictured as a striped globe within a system of rings, we are apt to regard the ideas suggested by such drawings as affording a true estimate of the planet's nature. In fact, many believe that the planet and its rings are really like what is presented in these pictures. It should be understood that what has been actually seen of Saturn by telescopic means cannot, in the nature of things, afford any true picture of the planet and its ring system. The picture must be filled in, not by the imagination but by the aid of reason;

and then, though much will still remain unknown, we shall have at least a far juster conception of the glories of the ringed world than when we simply contemplate drawings which show how the planet looks under telescopic scrutiny. This will at once appear, when we consider that Saturn never lies at a less distance than 732 millions of miles from the earth. With the most powerful telescope we see him no better (taking atmospheric effects into account) than we should if this distance were reduced to about a million miles. It is manifest that at this enormous distance all save the general features of his globe and of his rings must be indistinguishable. Where we seem to see a smooth solid globe striped with belts, there may be an orb no part of which is solid, girt round by masses of matter lying many miles above its seeming surface. Where we seem to see solid flat rings, neatly divided one from the other either by dark spaces or by difference of tint, there may be no continuous rings at all; the apparent spaces may be no real gaps; the difference of tint may imply no difference of material. On these and other points, the known facts afford important evidence, and, by reasoning upon them, we are carried far beyond the results directly conveyed to us by telescopic researches.

Saturn is distinguished, in the first place, by the enormous range of his orbit, not merely in distance from the sun, but in the distances which separate it from the orbits of his neighbour planets. His mean distance from the sun is about 872 millions of miles, his actual range of distance lying between 921 millions and 823 millions. These figures are imposing, but they are, in fact, meaningless save by comparison with other distances of the same class. Let it be noticed, then, that Saturn's mean distance from the sun exceeds the earth's more than nine and half times. Now Jupiter's distance exceeds the earth's rather more than five times (five and a fifth is very nearly the true proportion); so that between Jupiter's path and Saturn's there lies everywhere a span fully equal to four times the earth's distance from the sun. So much for Saturn's nearest neighbour on that side. But on the farther side lies Uranus, more than nineteen times as far away from the sun as our earth is; so that between the paths of Saturn and Uranus there lies everywhere a span equal to Saturn's own distance from the sun. Now all this is not intended as a mere display of wonderful distances. So far as mere dimensions are concerned, these arrays of figures are more imposing than impressive. But so soon as we take into account the circumstance that a planet is in some sense ruler over the spaces through which its course carries it, those spaces being by no means tenantless, we see that, *ceteris paribus*, the dignity of a planet is enhanced by the extent of the space separating its orbit from the orbits of its neighbours on either side. Now the space between the paths of Saturn and Jupiter exceeds the space enclosed by the earth's orbit no less than sixty-three times, while the space between the paths of Saturn and Uranus exceeds the space enclosed by the earth's orbit two hundred and seventy times! Assuming (as we seem compelled to do by continually growing evidence) that Saturn and his system were formed by the gathering in of

matter from the region over which Saturn now bears sway, we cannot wonder that the planet is a giant and his system wonderful in extent and complexity of structure. It is true that Jupiter on one side and Uranus on the other, share Saturn's rule over the vast space, 330 times the whole space circled round by the earth, which lies between the orbits of his neighbour planets. But Saturn's rule is almost supreme over the greater part of that enormous space. Combining the vastness of the space with its position—not so near to the sun that solar influence can greatly interfere with Saturn's, nor so far away as to approach the relatively-barren outskirts of the solar system—we seem to find a sufficient explanation of Saturn's *high* position in the scheme of the planets as respects volume and mass, and his *foremost* position as respects the complexity of the system over which he bears sway.

Briefly, then, to indicate his proportions, and the dimensions of his system,—

Saturn has a globe considerably flattened, his equatorial diameter being about 70,000 miles while his polar axis is nearly 7,000 miles shorter. Thus in volume he exceeds the earth nearly 700 times, and all the four terrestrial planets—Mercury, Venus, the Earth, and Mars—taken together, more than 336 times. In mass he does not exceed the earth and these other smaller planets so enormously, because his density (regarding him as a whole) is much less than the earth's. In fact, his density is less than that of any other known body (comets of course excepted) in the solar system. The reader is doubtless aware that the sun's mean density is almost exactly one-fourth of the earth's; Jupiter's is almost exactly the same as the sun's; but Saturn's is little more than half the sun's, being represented by the number thirteen only, where 100 represents the earth's. Thus, instead of exceeding the earth nearly 700 times in mass, as he would if he were of the same density, he exceeds her but about ninety times. But this disproportion must still be regarded as enormous, especially when it is added that the combined mass of the four terrestrial planets amounts to little more than the forty-fourth part of Saturn's mass. The combined mass of Uranus and Neptune, though these are members of the family of major planets, falls short of one-third of Saturn's mass: yet, by comparison with Jupiter, whose mass exceeds his more than three-fold, Saturn appears almost dwarfed. And it may be noted as a striking circumstance—one that is not sufficiently recognised in our astronomical treatises—that while Jupiter's mass exceeds the combined mass of all the other planets (including Saturn) about two and half times, Saturn exceeds all the remaining planets in mass about two and three quarter times. So unequally is the material of the planetary system distributed.

The mighty globe of Saturn rotates on its axis in about nine hours and a half, the most rapid rotation in the solar system so far as is yet known.

But what shall we say to indicate adequately the dimensions of that enormous ring system which circles around Saturn? Here we have no

unit of comparison, and scarcely any mode of presenting the facts except the mere statement of numerical relations. Thus, the full span of the rings, measured across the centre of the planet, amounts to 167,000 miles; the full breadth of the ring-system amounts to 35,600 miles. But these numbers convey only imperfect ideas. Perhaps the best way of indicating the enormous extent of the ring-system is to mention that circumnavigation of the world by a ship sailing from England to New Zealand by Good Hope and from New Zealand to England by Cape Horn would have to be repeated twenty-one times to give a distance equalling the outer circumference of the ring-system. The same double journey amounts in distance to but about two-thirds of the breadth of the ring-system.

As to the scale on which Saturn's system of satellites is constructed, we shall merely remark that the span of the outermost satellite's orbit exceeds nearly two-fold the complete span of the Jovian system of satellites, and exceeds the span of our moon's orbit nearly tenfold.

And now let us consider what is the probable nature of the vast orb, which travels—girt round always by its mighty ring-system—at so enormous a distance from the sun that his disc has but the ninetieth part of the size of the solar disc we see. Have we in Saturn, as has been so long the ordinary teaching of astronomy, a world like our own, though larger—the abode of millions on millions of living creatures—or must we adopt a totally different view of the planet, regarding it as differing as much from our earth as our earth differs from the moon, or as Saturn and Jupiter differ from the sun?

We must confess that if we set on one side altogether the ideas received from books on astronomy, endeavouring to view these questions independently of all pre-conceived opinions, it appears antecedently improbable that Saturn or Jupiter can resemble the earth either in attributes or purpose. We conceive that if a being capable of traversing at will the interstellar spaces were to approach the neighbourhood of our solar system, and to form his opinion respecting it from what he had observed in other parts of the sidereal universe, he would regard Jupiter and Saturn, the brother giants of our system, as resembling rather those companion orbs which are seen in the case of certain unequal double stars, than small dependent worlds like our earth and Venus. There are, perhaps, no instances known to our telescopists in which the disparity of *light*, as distinguished from real magnitude, is quite so great as that which exists in the case of the sun and the two chief planets of the solar system.*

* Even this is not certain. Jupiter, seen in full illumination from a standpoint so distant that both Jupiter and the sun might be regarded as equally distant from it, would appear to shine with rather more than the 3,000th part of the sun's light. This would correspond to the difference of apparent brightness between two stars of equal real magnitude and splendour, whereof one was about fifty-four times as far away as the other. There can be no doubt that the larger reflectors of the Herschels, Rosse, and Lassell, and the great refractors of Greenwich, Pulkowa, and Cambridge

But we see in the heaven of the fixed stars all orders of disproportion between double stars, from the closest approach to equality down to such extreme inequality, that while the larger star of the pair is one of the leading brilliants of the heavens, the smaller can only just be discerned with the largest telescopes yet made, used on the darkest and clearest nights. We have no reason to believe that the series stops just where our power of tracing it ceases; on the contrary, since the series is continuous as far as it goes, and since our own solar system is constituted as if it belonged to the series prolonged far beyond the limits which telescopic scrutiny has reached, we have reason for believing that such is indeed the interpretation of the observed facts. In other words, we may not unreasonably regard our solar system as a multiple system, a double star at certain ranges of distance, whence only the sun and Jupiter could be seen; a triple star at distances whence Saturn could be seen; and a quintuple star where Uranus and Neptune would come into view. To shew what excellent reason exists for regarding Mercury, Venus, the earth, and Mars as not to be included in this view, it is only necessary to remark that not one of these planets could be seen until the limits of the solar system had been crossed. To eyesight such as ours, not one of the four terrestrial planets could be seen from Saturn, and still less of course from Uranus or Neptune. It would be as unreasonable to hold the ring of asteroids, or even the myriads of systems of meteorolites and aërolites to be bodies resembling the earth and her fellow terrestrial planets, as it is to hold these terrestrial planets to be bodies resembling Jupiter and his fellow giants.

In all characteristics yet recognised by astronomers, Jupiter and Saturn differ most markedly from the earth and her fellow planets. In bulk and mass they belong manifestly to a different order of created things; in density they differ more from the earth than the sun does; they rotate much more swiftly on their axes; they receive much less light and heat from the sun; the lengths of their year exceed the length of the earth's year as remarkably as their day falls short of hers; the atmospheric envelope of each is divided into variable belts, utterly unlike anything existing in the earth's atmosphere; and, lastly, each is the centre of an important subsidiary scheme of bodies quite unlike the moon (the only secondary planet in the terrestrial family) as respects their relations to the primary around which they travel.

Notwithstanding all these circumstances in evidence of utter dissimilarity, and the fact that not one circumstance in the condition of the major planets suggests resemblance to the terrestrial planets, astronomy continues to treat of the planets of the solar system as though they

U.S., would bring the farther of two such stars into view if the nearer were of the first or second magnitude; and it is not at all unlikely that some of the exceedingly minute companions to bright stars, disclosed by these instruments, may be planets shining with reflected, not with inherent lustre.

aggregation whence the sun was one day to be formed, we see that the larger the planet the greater must have been its original heat. The heat generated during the condensation of a nebulous mass must depend upon the magnitude of the mass, since in fact the accepted theory of heat teaches us that the original heat of a globe so formed is measurable by the actual difference in dimensions between the globe and its parent cloud-mass, and of course the larger the cloud-mass the greater this difference would necessarily be. It is equally certain that the heat generated by the gathering-in of meteoric matter would be so much the greater according as the quantity of matter gathered and gathering was greater; for the heat is produced by the downfall of such matter on the globe it helps to form, and the greater the mass of that globe the greater is its attracting might, the greater the velocity it generates in the falling meteors, and therefore the greater the heat produced when they are brought to rest.

Saturn, then, would originally be much hotter than our earth, on any theory of the *evolution* of our solar system—and there are few astronomers who doubt that the solar system *was* wrought by processes of evolution to its present condition. But not only would Saturn be much hotter than the earth, but owing to his enormous size he would part with his heat at a much slower rate. On both accounts we should infer that at this present time Saturn is much hotter than the earth—in other words, since our earth still retains no inconsiderable proportion of its original heat, Saturn may be assumed to be in a state of intense heat. What his actual heat may be is not so easily determined. We shall presently show reasons for believing that an inferior limit, below which his heat does not lie, is indicated by the fact that he still possesses inherent luminosity. On the other hand, a superior limit is indicated by the fact that his inherent luminosity is not great, and that, in all probability, the thicker cloud-zones of Saturn prevent the passage of the greater part of his light.*

We should infer then that Saturn in some respects resembles the sun, though of course the very same reasoning which teaches us to believe that Saturn is very much hotter than the earth, leads us also to the conclusion that it is not nearly so hot as the sun. Now thus viewing Saturn, we should be led to expect, apart from all telescopic evidence to that effect, that he would resemble the sun in certain general features. For instance, we might expect that he would have spot-zones, while his equatorial zone would be free from spots; or, if it were thought that so close a resemblance was not to be looked for, then we might still expect that his equatorial zone, like the sun's, would be distinguished from the rest of his surface by

* To prevent misapprehension, it may be as well to remind the reader that the apparent continuity of Saturn's cloud-belts by no means implies that they are really continuous, and it is on *a priori* grounds highly improbable that they are so; openings in his cloud-zones two or three hundred miles in length and breadth would be quite undiscernible at Saturn's enormous distance.

some well-marked peculiarity. This is the case. The equatorial zone of Saturn is distinguished by a peculiar brightness from the rest of his surface, insomuch that the late Prof. Nichol was led to regard this zone as the scene of a constant precipitation of meteoric matter from the inside of the ring-system.

Now there is one important peculiarity which distinguishes the equatorial bright zone of Saturn from that of Jupiter. Jupiter's axis is almost square to the level of the path in which he travels around the sun; so that his equatorial zone lies nearly in that level, and is therefore directly illuminated by the sun. The aspect of Jupiter in fact, as seen from the sun, is *always* that which our earth presents in spring and autumn. But Saturn has an axis very considerably sloped to the level of the path in which he travels. It is more sloped even than our earth's axis. So that in the course of his long year of 10,759 days ($29\frac{1}{2}$ of our years) Saturn's globe presents towards the sun all the varying aspects which our earth presents, only with a somewhat greater range of variation. At one time he is placed as our earth is in spring, and then his equatorial belt, as seen from the sun, appears to lie straight across the middle of his disc. Rather more than seven years later he is posed as our earth is posed at mid-summer, his northern pole is bowed towards the sun, and his equator is seen as a half oval, curving far south of the middle point of his disc. He passes on from this position, and in seven more years he is placed as our earth is in autumn, with his equator again lying straight across his disc. Then seven years or so later, he presents the aspect of our earth at mid-winter, his equator curved into a half oval passing far to the north of the middle point of his disc. And finally at the end of yet seven years more (or more exactly, of one complete Saturnian year from the commencement of these changes), he is again as at first. Now it seems manifest that if the great cloud-zone which surrounds Saturn, appearing as a nearly white ring, were due to solar action, it would fluctuate in position as these changes proceeded. The very length of the Saturnian year should ensure the occurrence of such fluctuations. We have only to enquire what takes place on our own earth, where, though we have nothing comparable with the belt systems of Jupiter and Saturn, we have, nevertheless, over ocean regions, a sun-raised tropical cloud-band in the middle of the day. This cloud-band *follows the sun*, being equatorial in spring, passing far north of the equator, even to the very limit of the torrid zone, in summer, returning to the equator in autumn, passing to the southern limit of the torrid zone in winter, and returning again to the equator in spring. In fact this cloud-band as seen from the sun would always cross the middle of the earth's face as a straight line in spring and autumn, and as considerably more than a half oval agreeing in position with the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn at mid-summer and mid-winter. But nothing of the sort happens in Saturn's case. His equatorial white ring is *really* equatorial at all times, instead of being drawn to his tropics at his mid-summer and mid-winter seasons. This, in our opinion, is decisive

of the origin of this great band. If it were sun-raised, it would obey the sun; but being raised by Saturnian action, its position is solely determined by Saturn's rotation, and it therefore remains constantly equatorial.

But next a very strange and, at a first view, incredible circumstance, has to be considered in immediate connection with the relations we have been dealing with.

It sounds startling to suggest that *Saturn probably changes at times in size and shape.* Yet the evidence in favour of the suggestion is very weighty. It may briefly be presented as follows:—

In April, 1805, Sir Wm. Herschel, who had hitherto always seen the planet of an oval figure, found that it presented a strangely distorted appearance. It was flattened as usual at the poles, but also at the equator; accordingly it had a quadrangular or oblong figure (with rounded corners, of course), its longest diameters being the two which (crossing each other in the middle of the disc) passed from north latitude 48 degrees on Saturn to the same southerly latitude. Or we may otherwise describe the appearances presented, by saying, that Saturn seemed *swollen* in both the temperate zones. Herschel found that the same appearance was presented no matter what telescope he employed, and he tried many, some seven feet, some ten, one twenty, and one forty feet in length. With these telescopes Jupiter presented his ordinary oval aspect. But Herschel is not the only astronomer by whom such appearance have been noticed. On August 5, 1803, Schröter found that Saturn's figure was distorted. Dr. Kitchener says that in the autumn of 1818 he found Saturn to have the figure described by Herschel. The present Astronomer Royal has seen Saturn similarly distorted; and on another occasion *flattened* in the temperate zones. In January, 1855, Coolidge, with the splendid refractor of the Cambridge U. S. Observatory noticed a swollen appearance in Saturnian latitude 20 degrees; yet on the 9th the planet had resumed its usual aspect. In the report of the Greenwich Observatory for 1860-61, it is stated that "Saturn has *sometimes* appeared to exhibit the *square-shouldered* aspect." The two Bonds of America, surpassed by few in observing skill, have seen Saturn square-shouldered and have noticed variations of shape.

It seems impossible to reject such testimony as this. Nor can it be disposed of by showing that ordinarily Saturn presents a perfectly elliptical figure. It is the essential point of the circumstances we are considering that they are unusual.

Now we do not pretend to explain how such changes of shape are brought about. But we would invite special attention to the circumstance that if these changes be admitted as having occasionally occurred (and we do not see how they can be called in question), then the result is only startling in connection with that theory of Saturn's condition which we are here opposing. If Saturn be a globe resembling our earth, then sinkings and upheavals, such as these appearances indicate, must be regarded as involving amazing and most stupendous throes—as in fact

absolutely incredible no matter what evidence may be found in their favour. But so soon as we regard Saturn's whole globe as in a state of intense heat, and his belt-system as indicating the continual action of forces of enormous activity, we no longer find any difficulty in understanding the possibility of changes such as Sir W. Herschel, Sir G. Airy, the Bonds, and others of like observing skill, have seen with some of the finest reflecting and refracting telescopes ever constructed by man. Nay, we may even go farther, and find in solar phenomena certain reasons for believing that Saturn's globe would be subjected to precisely such changes. It appears to have been rendered extremely probable by Secchi and others, that our sun's globe varies in dimensions under the varying influences to which he is subjected. At the height of the spot-period the sun seems to be reduced in diameter, while his coloured sierra is deeper, and the red prominences are larger than usual, the reverse holding at the time when the sun has no spots or few. Of course this is not understood as implying a real change in the quantity of solar matter, but only as indicating the varying level at which the solar cloud-envelope lies. We may safely assume that these changes, which correspond to the great spot-period, affect chiefly the spot zones which lie in the parts of the sun's globe corresponding to our temperate zones; but for the same reasons that the sun's globe is perfectly spherical so far as measurements can be depended upon, namely, because of its relatively slow rotation—such differences would be too slight to be measurable. Regarding Saturn, then, as we have already been compelled to do for other reasons, as resembling the sun so far that he is in an intensely heated condition, we see grounds for believing that *his* temperate zones would be exposed to variations of level. (cloud level) which at times might be very considerable and thus discernible from our earth. For owing to his rapid rotation on his axis, all such effects would be relatively greater than on a slowly rotating orb like the sun; and in fact we recognise this distinction in the great compression of Saturn's globe. Moreover, if we regard the waxing and waning of the solar spots as associated with the motions of the members of the sun's family, we can well understand that the members of Saturn's family, which lie so much nearer to him compared with his own dimensions should produce more remarkable effects.* But whether this be so or not, it is

* It must not be understood that in thus speaking we countenance the theory that either the planets produce the sun-spots, or the satellites of Saturn effect the remarkable changes we have been dealing with. The real causes of all solar phenomena must be sought in the sun's own globe; and Saturnian phenomena are in the main, we have little doubt, produced by Saturnian action. But even as our moon (probably) exerts an influence on the occurrence of earthquakes and volcanoes, *not* by her own attraction directly, but by affecting the balance between terrestrial forces, so it may well be that the planets indirectly affect the sun's condition, and that the Saturnian satellites even more effectually act upon Saturn. It would be extremely interesting to inquire whether any connection can be traced between the changes of the Saturnian belts and the motions of his satellites. Or the inquiry might be more readily, and quite as effectually applied to Jupiter and his system.

certain that whereas there is nothing inexplicable or even very surprising in supposing that Saturnian cloud-layers, resulting from the action of intense Saturnian heat, alter greatly at times in level, the observations we have described become altogether inexplicable, and cannot, in fact, be rejected, if we adopt the theory that Saturn resembles the earth on which we live.

It may be asked whether Jupiter, to which planet the same reasoning may be applied, has ever shown signs of similar changes. To this it may first be replied, that we should not expect Jupiter to be affected to the same degree, simply because the chief disturbing causes—his satellites and the sun—are always nearly in the same level, owing to the peculiarity in Jupiter's pose to which attention has already been directed. But secondly, such briefly-lasting changes as we might expect to detect have occasionally been suspected by observers of considerable skill; and amongst others by the well-known Schröter, of Lilienthal. Such changes have consisted, for the most part, merely in a slight flattening of a part of Jupiter's outline. But on one occasion a very remarkable phenomenon, only (but very readily) explicable in this way, was witnessed by three practised observers—Admiral Smyth, Professor Pearson, and Sir T. Maclear—at three different stations. Admiral Smyth thus describes what he saw:—"On Thursday, June 26, 1828, the evening being extremely fine, I was watching the second satellite of Jupiter as it gradually approached to transit Jupiter's disc. It appeared in contact at about half-past ten, and for some minutes remained on the edge of the disc, presenting an appearance not unlike that of the lunar mountains coming into view during the moon's first quarter, until it finally disappeared on the body of the planet. At least twelve or thirteen minutes must have elapsed, when, accidentally turning to Jupiter again, to my astonishment I perceived the same satellite *outside the disc*! It remained distinctly visible for at least four minutes, and then suddenly vanished!" For our own part, we can conceive of no possible explanation of this remarkable phenomenon, unless it be admitted that the change was in the apparent outline of Jupiter. Of course, to suppose that even a cloud-layer rose or fell, in a few minutes, several thousand miles (about 8,000, if the stated times be correct), is as inadmissible as to suppose the solid crust of a globe to undergo so vast a change of level; but nothing of this sensational description is required. All that would be necessary would be that an upper cloud-layer should for a few minutes be dissipated into vapour, either by warm currents, or more probably by a temporary increase of the heat supplied by Jupiter's fiery globe within the cloud-envelopes, and that a few minutes later the clouds should form again by the condensation of the vaporized matter. The changes in the aspect of the Jovian belts are often sufficiently rapid to indicate the operation of precisely such processes.

Associated with such phenomena as we have mentioned is the evidence we have as to the brightness of Saturn and Jupiter. If these planets

were perfectly cloud-encompassed, we should expect them to shine much more brightly than earthy or rocky globes of equal size, similarly placed, and surrounded only with a tenuous atmosphere. In fact, we should expect the planets if cloud-encompassed to shine about four times as brightly as though they were constituted like our moon. They would in that case, however, be white planets, not only as seen by the naked eye, but when examined with the telescope. In point of fact, they shine, according to the very careful measurements of Zöllner, about as brightly as though they *were* perfectly cloud-enveloped; but they are neither of them found to be white under telescopic scrutiny. Bond, of America, says, indeed, that Jupiter shines *fourteen* times as brightly as he would if constituted like the moon; and though this is a surprising result, and would imply that some portion of Jupiter's light is certainly inherent, it is well to notice that it is confirmed by De la Rue's photographic researches; for he found that a photographic image of the moon can be taken in about two-thirds of the time required in Jupiter's case, whereas the moon should require but a twenty-fifth of the time required by Jupiter, if her reflecting power were equal to his, since Jupiter is five times as far away from the sun. It would follow from this that Jupiter shines nearly seventeen times as brightly as he would if he were constituted like the moon. Taking the lowest estimate, however, we find that both Saturn and Jupiter shine much more brightly than planets of equal size and similarly placed, but having a surface formed of any kind of earth or rock known to us. And taking into account the well-marked colours of these planets, it follows as an almost demonstrated fact that each shines with no inconsiderable proportion of inherent light.*

So soon as we view Saturn as a globe intensely heated, and the scene of forces of enormous energy, we are compelled to dismiss the idea that he is the abode of life. But singularly enough, this conclusion, which was rejected by Brewster as rendering apparently unintelligible the existence of so large and massive an orb, girt about by a system so complex and beautiful, does in reality at once present, in an explicable aspect, not merely the vast bulk of Saturn himself, but the scheme over which he bears sway; for, as it seems to us, not the least of the objections against the theory that Saturn is an inhabited world, is found in the useless wealth of material exhibited, on that supposition, in his ring system and family of satellites. It is very well to grow rapturous, as many besides Brewster and Chalmers have done, over the beauty of the

* I might take as equally convincing proof of the intensely heated condition of these giant planets the fact that the shadows of the nearer satellites, which theoretically should be black, have *sometimes* been seen to be grey, and never appear to be much darker than the fourth satellite in transit. And as sufficient proof of the great depth of Jupiter's atmosphere, I could take the fact that sometimes two shadows have been seen both belonging to the same satellite. However, it would require more space than can here be spared to show the force of these facts. I remind the reader that whatever is proved respecting the condition of Jupiter, may be regarded as rendered probable of his brother giant, Saturn

Saturnian skies, illuminated by so many satellites and by the glorious rings; and it is very proper, no doubt, for those who so view Saturn's system to dwell admiringly on the beneficence with which all this abundance of reflected light has been provided, to make up to the Saturnians for the small amount of light and heat which they receive from the sun. But unfortunately for this way of viewing the matter, the satellites and rings do not by any means subserve the purposes thus ascribed to them. Even if all the satellites could be full together, they would not supply a sixteenth part of the light which we receive from our full moon; and they cannot even appear very beautiful when we consider that the apparent brightness of their surface can be but about one-ninetieth of the brightness of our moon's. As for the rings, so far from appearing to be contrived specially for the advantage of Saturnian beings, these rings, if Saturn *were* inhabited, would be the most mischievous and inconvenient appendages possible. They would give light during the summer nights, indeed, when light was little wanted, though even this service would be counteracted by the circumstance that at midnight the enormous shadow of the planet would hide the greater part of the rings. But it is in winter that the rings would act most inconveniently; for then, just at the season when the Saturnians would most require an additional supply of light and heat, the rings would cut off for extensive regions on Saturn the whole of the solar light and heat which would otherwise be received. Dr. Lardner was quite mistaken in supposing (after a cursory examination of the mathematical relations involved) that the eclipses so produced would be but partial. His object was excellent, since he sought to show that "the infinite skill of the Great Architect of the universe has not permitted that the stupendous annular appendage, the uses of which still remain undiscovered, should be the cause of such darkness and desolation to the inhabitants of the planet, and such an aggravation of the rigours of their fifteen years' winter," as would result from eclipses lasting many months or even years in succession. But we must not endeavour to strengthen faith in the wisdom of the Almighty by means of false mathematics. So soon as the subject is rigorously treated, we find that Sir John Herschel was quite right in his original statements on this subject. The present writer published, in 1865, a tabular statement of the length of time during which (according to rigid mathematical calculations) the eclipses produced by the rings last in different Saturnian latitudes. The following quotation from the work in which this table appeared will serve to show that the partial daily eclipses conceived by Lardner are very far from the truth, or rather are only a part, and a very small part, of the truth:—"In latitude 40 degrees (north or south), the eclipses begin when nearly three years have elapsed from the time of the autumnal equinox. The morning and evening eclipses continue for more than a year, gradually extending until the sun is eclipsed during the whole day. These total eclipses continue to the winter solstice, and for a corresponding period after the winter solstice; in all, for 6 years,

296 days, or 5,543 Saturnian days. This period is followed by more than a year of morning and evening eclipses. The total period during which eclipses of one kind or another take place is no less than 8 years, 293 days. If we remember that latitude 40 degrees on Saturn corresponds with the latitude of Madrid on our earth, it will be seen how largely the rings must influence the conditions of habitability of Saturn's globe, considered with reference to the wants of beings constituted like the inhabitants of our earth." * In the presence of such facts as these, we may follow Sir John Herschel in saying, that "we should do wrong to judge of the fitness or unfitness of the arrangements described, from what we see around us, when perhaps the very combinations which convey to our minds only images of horror may be in reality theatres of the most striking and glorious displays of beneficent contrivance." But we do well to exercise our minds in enquiring how this may be; and, as it appears to us, the views which have been advocated in this essay at once afford an answer to this enquiry. We are taught to see in the Saturnian satellites a family of worlds dependent on him, in the same way that the members of the solar family are dependent on the sun. We see that though the satellites can supply Saturn with very little light, he can supply them, whether by reflection or by inherent luminosity, with much. And lastly, we see that the ring system (which has been shown to consist of a multitude of small bodies, each travelling in its own course), while causing no inconvenience by eclipsing parts of Saturn, may not improbably serve highly important purposes by maintaining an incessant downfall of meteoric matter upon his surface, and thus sustaining the Saturnian heat, in a manner not unlike that in which it is now generally believed that a portion at least of the sun's heat-supply is maintained by the fall of interplanetary meteors. In fine, we see in Saturn and his system a miniature, and a singularly truthful miniature, of the solar system. In one system, as in the other, there is a central orb, far surpassing all the members of the system in bulk and mass; in each system there are eight orbs circling around the central body; and lastly, each system exhibits, close by the central orb, a multitude of discrete bodies—the zodiacal light in the solar system, and the scheme of rings in the Saturnian system—doubtless subserving important though as yet unexplained purposes in the economy of the systems to which they belong.

* As this passage has been quoted nearly *verbatim*, and without any sort of acknowledgment, in a compilation on *Elementary Astronomy* recently published, the present writer, that he may not be suspected of plagiarism, ventures to point out that it is not he who is the borrower.

A Vision of Communism: a Grotesque.

I.

"It will come.

"Already we have seen the handwriting on the wall. Infatuated governments, self-seeking officials, fraudulent capitalists, they may put off the day of reckoning, in which the whole social fabric shall totter and crumble away, and men wonder that such a hollow thing should have stood so long; but the day must come.

"Aye! But when? How many ages of ignorance and injustice must first pass over us? how many thousands perish of want? and how many live out a life little better than a prolonged death struggle?"

This was my midnight reverie. Mechanically I took up a newspaper; but it was one symptom of the attack of Communism-on-the-brain under which I was labouring that, look where I would down those columns, I saw nothing but those sickening paragraphs giving an account of the amount of destitution at present existing in London, and always side by side with those, to me just as sickening, stating that the late So-and-So's will had been proved, and the personalty sworn under 2,000,000*l.* Did I turn to the Law Courts, I was sure to mark how, in one, some wretched street Arab had been sentenced to six months for petty larceny, in another, the Honourable bankrupt's liabilities had been laid at 50,000*l.*—no assets—bankrupt discharged. So much for "the times" and their equity. "And still men can wonder at the discontent, and still the cry goes up in vain, and will, till the millions shall feel their strength and lay hands on all those rights, so long, so skilfully monopolized by the units.

"But the means! How many more French revolutions and blunders and massacres? How many victims must fall to ignorance and tyranny and prejudice? how much heroism be wasted on both sides ere Communism become more than a mere name—a nightmare to some, a day-dream to others? Only our children's children's children will know this!" "I beg your pardon," said a voice at my elbow.

Starting, for I had thought myself alone in my study, I turned, and saw a stranger. He was clad in what I will call a toga, and carried what I will call a wand. (But, on the back and in the hand of a common churchwarden, we should call the first "cassock," and the second, "poker.") "Sir!" I uttered, amazed.

"You were holding forth on the subject so many prate about, so few understand—Communism. Do you mean to say that you belong to the few who have its principles really at heart?"

"I am one of those unfortunate persons," I replied despondingly.

' Who and what are you? Have you come hither to mock me as a political dreamer of dreams? "

"Nothing of the sort; I come from a contented city; a city of liberty, equality, and fraternity. If you like I will take you to see your ideal realized—comfort for the million, in a land where all go shares in happiness."

I had read Dante, *Faust*, and *The Coming Race*. I saw the situation at a glance. Here was a messenger from another sphere, offering to initiate me into the mysteries of the supernatural.

"Are you Virgil?" I asked, sorrowfully, and shaking my head. "If so, you won't do for me. I never trouble my head more than I can help about the arrangements of Paradise, Purgatory, or Pandemonium. Are you Mephistopheles? If so, I shan't do for you. I am a philanthropist, and you cannot tempt me. Do you come from the Viril Ya? Can Viril, which may very likely never be discovered after all, take off one jot from the social misery of 1873?"

"I've no connection with the parties," he replied, drily: "I'm a plain nineteenth-century man, and here's my card—Isotes, late Manager of the Grand Communist Company, unlimited."

"Late," I repeated. "Which is defunct, you or the Commune?"

"Oh, neither; the manager, not the man, is no more—now the Commune is self-supporting at last."

"But where is your state?"

"Ah! Our company don't advertise. Were the Commune thrown open to the public, rogues from the opposite political party would get in, and—such is their venomous hatred for the principles of equality and justice—move heaven and earth to sow discord among us, undermine our system, and bring about its ruin. In you, blind, backward, prejudiced though you are, I see an honest thorough-going leveller. We have no objection to such as you inspecting our establishment."

"Have you had many visitors?"

"None. We have just got our state into good working order, and in consideration of my services as manager, I am officially selected to show the Commune to such outsiders as I find worthy. You are the first I have found." The very first! My heart bounded. I thought of the leaders I would write, the pamphlets, the essays. What a treasure I should be to all the editors in London.

"Will you venture?" he asked.

"That I will," said I solemnly, clasping his offered palm.

He took hold of my arm, saying, "The fare for the trip is ten pounds, and there are no extra fees."

II.

I had nerved myself for a strange and fearful voyage. I was prepared to encounter murky shades and Stygian rivers, to be shot down the shaft of a mine, or wafted aloft on an aerial excursion to the moon, like the adventurers in "Babil and Bijou." Great was my surprise, and deep my secret disappointment, when my guide took me in a common cab to a

railway station, and thence into a train, with nothing remarkable about it except that we were the only passengers.

Then I think I must have slept. When I roused myself it was broad day. We were passing through a fine open country. There, opposite me, sat my guide smoking a cigar, with a self-complacent impassible air.

"Tell me, Isotes," I began by-and-by, "how you succeeded in solving the social problem that puzzles our longest-headed statesmen?"

"Puzzle them? Stuff!" he replied. "When the rogues lay their long heads together, be sure it's not to find out how to solve the question, but how to make it insolvable. But for their lies and tricks you might have kept pace with us. Communism, as you and they understand it, is a very old story—mere boy's play. Why we began it twenty years ago, when we started our State. Started with Simple Communism."

"Is there then," I asked, mildly, "such a thing as compound Communism?" "That's the very point I'm coming to. As for the little question of Labour *versus* Capital, it's been long settled among us; but there you are, still bickering about such simple affairs as the distribution of land, stock, and so forth. Why, we look on private property—abolished by us twenty years ago—as you may on negro slavery, the Corn Laws, and other exploded abuses."

"Twenty years of perfect Communism!" I exclaimed, rapturously.

"Not so fast. We had made a beginning, learnt our A B C, and that was all. In point of fact the difference it made was slight. The more stringent the laws, the more certain they were to be broken. Men kept making fortunes under the rose, and there was no stopping hands from giving or hands from taking. Comfort and misery seemed nearly as unevenly distributed as ever. Some fellows lived in clover, others died in a ditch. Some were worshipped and flattered, others persecuted and trodden down. Evidently there was a hitch in the Commune,—a panic spread among the shareholders, and we had a rough job to weather the crisis. But this first experiment had opened some of our eyes to the stumbling stone—the root of the evil."

"And where did you find that it lay?"

"In Nature."

"Ah," I sighed, "in Original Sin."

"Nothing of the sort. In the Iniquitous Original Division of Personal Stock."

"Eh?"

"I'll make it plain to you in few words. There, in our State, all such private property as land, money, and marketable commodities, was now public, but on monopolies of Nature's gifts not the smallest check was laid. The anomaly's monstrous when you see it."

"Well," said I, "but unfortunately the gifts of Nature are not things you can put into a common purse in which every one is to go shares." I spoke jestingly, but Isotes looked perfectly serious, and was about to explain, when the train drew up at a station.

"Here we are," said he, "let the Commune speak for itself."

As we walked down from the station to a large thriving looking city, he observed,—“I have sketched out your day, so that you shall not waste time. First I'll take you round the town, just stopping to cast a glance at the colleges, halls, and public buildings. Then you shall come to my house, dine with me, and, in the evening, I'll take you to a private ball. I want you thus to get a general notion of our social system, and we can take the details to-morrow.”

III.

We began with the College. Of my first impressions of the town I say nothing, finding nothing to say. The houses were all of medium size, and fac-similes of each other. I was going to make a note of the unpleasant monotony of the effect, but I observed the absence of dens and hovels such as disgrace our metropolis, and let it pass.

The College, a large, symmetrical building, stood a little apart from the town. The vast playgrounds were swarming with youthful Communists. It was with some emotion that I watched the sports of these boys. Little, probably, did they reckon of their privileges, birth in this equitable realm, and an education free from the dangers of our public colleges, those little monarchies, with all monarchy's abuses in miniature—bullying for the weak, license for the strong, flattery for the rich and titled. Isotes and I stood watching a cricket match. Some of the players, big, burly fellows, seemed curiously clumsy and stupid, the rest were nimble and skilful, but feeble and puny, and I thought the game lagged. Near me, a youth of uncommonly powerful build lay stretched lazily on the grass, looking on. I accosted him, and asked when he was going to take his innings.

“I never play cricket,” he replied. “It's bad for me. Can't you see how unfortunately strong I am? Feel my arm.”

“Well,” said I, “with those muscles of yours, I should hope you'd soon beat the awkward squad yonder, and send the ball flying well over the College roof.”

As I spoke, Isotes drew me forcibly away. “Mind what you're about, please,” said he, sharply, “I shall have to answer for the misconduct of the visitors I bring over. Recollect, you're not at Eton or Harrow. The College rules with regard to athletic games are these:—Boys whose stock of natural strength and agility shall exceed the average are forbidden to practice them and become proficient. Where the excess of physical power is extreme, the boy is forbidden to take part in them at all. This is in order that all those who do play may be nearly on a par.”

“But what tame affairs your games must always be.”

“Throw the competition open to a large school, you will always find that some half-a-dozen will outshine all the rest, and be worshipped as heroes and kings. And why? Because they are honest and deserving? No. Because they chance to be born to an exorbitant amount of private property—brawny arms, broad chests, long legs, quick sight. Is this a cause why a youth, like your land and water giants, should make money,

be talked about and have half a newspaper column devoted to him and his exploits? What is to become of the weaker, the puny, the short-winded brethren? But grant practise and skill to the weak, and not to the strong, and you bring the two parties on a level."

To this I had nothing to reply. He next took me into the gymnasium, where we found such a sickly looking set of boys, that I asked, in some alarm, if the site of the college were a healthy one.

"Uncommonly so. The redistribution of the wealth of health, a very delicate job, too, has been carried out with signal success. Not a boy leaves school of whom it can be said that he has a particularly robust or a particularly shaky constitution. We have a sanitary standard, the highest to which it is possible, by dint of care and exercises, to raise the weakly boys. The reduction to it of the over-healthy is a comparatively easy task, but quite necessary. There is no privilege that gives a man such an undue advantage over his neighbours as the possession of the lion's share of health."

We were now entering the schoolroom, where a number of little Communists were receiving instruction in the Latin tongue. I noticed one bright-eyed, sharp-looking fellow, sitting by himself, munching an apple. I patted him on the head, and asked him the Latin for apple.

"I've not begun Latin," he said.

"Not yet?" (He looked thirteen, or more.)

"No, and I'm half afraid I shan't. You know, I'm a monstrously clever fellow."

"Indeed; then what can you do?"

"Read; and I'm soon to learn writing, if I don't get on too fast."

I took the ex-manager aside, and asked if the young gentleman was out of his mind. Isotes laughed.

"That boy is what *you* call a genius—we a little intellectual millionaire. His parents never found it out. It was one of the masters here who first detected in him a private hoard of quickness and intelligence which, cleverly invested, would one day have enabled him to buy up the whole college, masters included. The same allowance of teaching and brain culture that his schoolfellows receive would bring him in extra profit at the rate of 200 per cent. But by keeping him back, and carefully checking his activity of mind, we cut down his net mental income to the average figure, and prevent his unjust promotion over the mass."

"But the injustice to the boy himself!"

"He is well off enough."

"But must fall short of what he might have been."

"Which makes him equal with the others. There is a certain point up to which all boys, not positively deficient, can be educated. Those with ready wits, good memories, and superior powers of application should be kept by artificial means from rising above it. Shall the boy who learns slowly and hardly be branded as a dunce, because that despot, Nature, has treated him ill? Shall the naturally apt, the keen, the sagacious, trample on the naturally obtuse? Not here in the Commune."

Here in the Commune, as I was beginning to understand, they undertook to set even Nature to rights, and life was a handicap race.

IV.

As we went out into the street, the first words that Isotes let drop confounded me quite.

"Ah," he said, carelessly, "here comes the Marquis; I'll introduce you, if you like."

"Marquis," I repeated, aghast.

"Yes; the Marquis of Carabbas."

"And you call this a Commune?"

"Why not? Because we have our aristocracy?"

"It's flatly absurd. The very notion of such an institution is contrary to the first principles of equality."

"You talk like a novice, who hasn't got beyond the first principles. You have everything yet to learn. Look there."

A little hunchback was riding towards us. He was magnificently dressed (a great contrast in this respect to the other male citizens, who all wore plain clothes—very plain clothes), and was mounted on a fine thoroughbred.

"That's his Grace," said Isotes, bowing politely. "In the Commune all cripples are barons, blind men earls, dwarfs marquises, and so on. Titles rising with the gravity of the natural defect. You see these people are born to a heritage of scorn. For a long time we really did not know what to do with them, and once they revolted, saying that it was flatly absurd, in a Commune, for men to start in life at such a disadvantage as they did. Now, we could not reduce the whole state to their level, and so somebody proposed to exterminate all the incurables, but that measure was rejected as too inhuman. It was a lucky hit, this raising them into a nobility. Before, they were always grumbling. But this guarantees them a share of that respect which is every honest man's due, and of which nature deprived them from their birth. The street boys used to laugh at Carabbas. They don't dare, now that he has got his coronet and ermine mantle." A citizen was passing at this moment, and stopped to shake hands with Isotes, who accosted him at the top of his voice—

"Well—did you get the order?"

"Remanded for a month," was the reply. "I must pass another examination. I'm not given up yet."

"That gentleman," my cicerone explained, "has lately become very deaf. He applied for an order——"

"For the hospital?"

"No, no; for an order of knighthood. But they don't think the case bad enough at present. Should it become confirmed he will be dubbed immediately."

I made no comment. But the picture that arose before me of a House of Lords thus constituted, was so droll, that I fell into a fit of laughter.

Passing through the streets, I was chiefly struck by the absence of beauty among the women, and also by the frightful way in which many of them were dressed. This bad taste seemed, however, by no means general. Presently I inquired, jestingly, of Isotes, whether they had many pretty lady-Communists. He looked astonished by the question—

"Why, the stock of beauty was never larger than at present. There goes a pretty girl—look!"

"Pretty scarecrow," I muttered rudely, at the sight of a damsel in a rusty black gown and shawl, widow's cap, and spectacles.

"Oh, you mean the dress. My word for it, she has splendid eyes, hair, and complexion. That girl came to us with a fortune in her face. Well, in the Commune, of course, she couldn't have it to spend. We know how, in society, the pretty and attractive lord it over the homely and silent; how, when it comes to marriage, the former may pick and choose from a hundred suitors, and the latter never come in for a single offer. Now we can't alter the girls' faces, but dress goes a long way, and their costumes we can and do regulate. Our fixed rate of beauty is within the reach of almost any lady who dresses well, and those to whom an extravagant grant of grace and good looks was made in the first instance have to dress down to it."

I thought this a sad pity, and asked if things had always been so in the Commune.

"No," he said, with a sigh; "there was a time—but we must not regret it—when no limitation was laid on personal charms. What were the results? Appropriation of the affections of the whole youth of the Commune by some half-a-dozen belles! Insurrection of the snub-nosed, red-haired, and hard-featured sisterhood! It certainly was a crying injustice for them, though fairly well-conducted and hard-working, to be quoted in social life at half the price of those others. An institution of ugly heiresses would only have complicated matters. But we smoothed all difficulties by this simple expedient of the 'Reduction of all Beauty to a Medium.'"

V.

Isotes next directed my attention to a large hall, from which emanated sounds of music. "Shall we look in?" he asked; "there's a grand concert going on at the Academy."

"By all means," I replied; "I am a musician myself, and always regretted to hear it said that such doctrines as yours had a tendency to disparage the fine arts."

He laughed. "Another of the crude notions of a beginner. Here we encourage art, under proper restrictions, of course. Even a Commune feels the want of a little recreation now and then."

My first act as we entered the concert-room was to clap both hands to my ears. A Communist virtuoso was running through some variations, with wonderful facility and tremendous force, on that instrument of torture

—a piano utterly out of tune. Luckily he had nearly finished. Soon the discords ceased, and he retired amid moderate applause. After one or two indifferent vocal exhibitions, came a young lady pianist, nervous and wooden, who shuffled through a sonata on one of the most splendid instruments I ever heard in my life.

"I don't care for her," I observed to Isotes, as we left the hall. "But if the young man who appeared first had only had her piano to play upon——"

"He would have received an extravagant sum of applause," broke in the ex-manager; "double as much as the girl, who is the most painstaking person of the two—practises nine hours a day. But her fingers are naturally stiff. The other has flexibility of joints, lightness of touch, and a capital ear. All this he got for nothing, inherited from his mother, who was musical too. Is it fair that he who holds a large musical fortune that he never earned should be allowed the extra advantage of a first-rate instrument? What chance would Labour have against Capital without some such regulations to balance a preponderance of the latter in such cases."

We had now reached my guide's house. As we went upstairs, he asked me if I was beginning to understand Communism.

"I think, with you, that I have everything to learn," I replied, humbly. In the drawing-room we found two young people, whom Isotes introduced to me as his son and daughter, Abel and Eva. He then excused himself, having to attend to some business.

Eva was a beauty. I knew it directly, from her unbecoming dress. There, beneath her hideous cap, I could spy the cropped gold hair. That clumsy ruff bespoke a slender throat, the ill-fitting gown and enormous slippers a graceful figure and tiny feet, those blue spectacles a bright pair of eyes. I soon became friends with her and Abel. I found both very conversational and lively. Only when I alluded to the Costume Laws in the Commune a shade crossed Eva's face. I frankly admitted how sorry I was to see her disfigure herself by blue spectacles.

"What's to be done?" she said, seriously; "I've got such an enormous stock of beauty, and it *will* accumulate. They say if it goes on at this rate I shall have to dye my hair grey. But perhaps I might leave off my spectacles if I could learn to squint."

"Don't, pray, talk of anything so horrible. Have you any sisters, or brothers besides Abel?"

"Several. But we gave them all away. Several Communist families were very short of children at that time. Generally as many as four or five are allowed to each household."

Isotes now joined us, and we all went to dinner together. The two young people interested me immensely, especially Abel, who was a very handsome, striking-looking fellow. He had an unfortunate impediment in his speech, but all his observations, when he did get them out, were most original, thoughtful and witty. But once or twice he let fall a remark betraying an ignorance amounting to that of a savage. Immediately after

dinner I started with Isotes for the ball he had promised to take me to. As we went I seized the opportunity of being alone with him to congratulate him on his charming son and daughter.

He told me they had given the Commune a world of trouble, being endowed, both of them, with parts of outrageous value, especially Abel, who, at the age of six, composed verses and played like an angel on the piano. Of course he was forbidden to learn music, and his education has been most carefully neglected. At sixteen he was taken with a lucky stammer which had squared matters to some degree. But he had still to be watched. For a suspicion had been spread that the stammer was all a sham, put on in order that he might be allowed to dine out.

"To dine out?"

"Abel has a good deal of conversation, and a large fund of wit and repartee."

"A very agreeable fellow to meet at dinner,"

"Yes, but in the Commune very agreeable fellows are not allowed to dine out. They are so apt to monopolize the invitations. I knew men in London who might positively choose for themselves, night after night, at whose table they would dine; while for others an evening from home was a rare and blessed event. Natural social gifts, such as Abel's, must be bridled. Else, the owner's gross receipts of social pleasure will be far in advance of those of the majority of his fellow-men, whose social incomes are derived from less productive sources."

VI.

My spirits, which had been a little damped by the previous dialogue, rose as we entered the ball-room. I delight in dancing, and was beginning to accustom myself to the effect of the Costume Laws. Introductions, said Isotes, were not considered necessary at a ball. So I walked up unhesitatingly to a young and tolerably nice-looking girl, and requested the honour of a dance. She almost bounded from her chair with surprise, or indignation, or both.

"Why, I'm only seventeen. Surely I don't look more than that!"

"A charming age," I replied, gallantly. "Sweet seventeen, may I have the pleasure?"

She turned to her chaperon with a look of dismay I shall never forget; but the old lady smiled on me benignly.

"The gentleman is a stranger. I have heard all about him. Sit down," she added, to me, "you may talk to my daughter, though she may not dance. In the Commune, no girl ever does, till she is past five-and-twenty."

"But why, madam, why?"

"It is a set-off to the exaggerated profit afforded to youth and freshness and denied to sterling worth and experience. We passed this by-law to quiet the spinsters. They brought a petition complaining that, having neither the dignified position of married women, nor the attractions of

early girlhood, they were unfairly placed. The grievance was proved. This rule and a few others of the same sort were passed in their favour, and have worked very well, for there have been no complaints since."

Of all the aberrations of justice I had yet witnessed this seemed to me the most preposterous. Unable to disguise my feelings, I left the room in a huff, without a word to Isotes, and walked straight back to his house, trying to invent some excuse for my sudden flight. As I mounted the stairs I heard the most exquisite sounds stealing from the drawing-room. I opened the door softly, entered on tiptoe, and there remained, rooted to the spot by the charming sight that met my eyes. Eva, rid of her ruff, cap, and spectacles, looking as lovely as a cherubim, sat at the piano, singing. Beside her stood Abel, listening, entranced. She touched the notes with an untutored hand, but her voice, though quite untrained, was beautiful—past description—rich, full, and flawless. As I listened, tears of delight rose to my eyes, and I uttered an involuntary "Bravis-sima!" Eva jumped up, and on seeing me, gave a piercing shriek.

"Don't be frightened," I implored. "That song again, Eva. My child, you have the most glorious voice in the world. Take care of it, cultivate it well, and one day you will be the delight of nations," I concluded, with enthusiasm.

"What do you mean?" she cried. "Please, please don't tell. Only papa knows, and he says there's no harm in it if I never sing; and I never do, except to Abel. But the Commune would not trust me, and, if they knew, I might have to do something disagreeable. For there's no kind of property on which they keep so strict a watch as on fine voices."

"And they are quite right," broke in Abel. "I've been told that in London people will sometimes give five guineas to hear one, and that the finest singers are bribed to appear, at the rate of two or three hundred pounds per night, and have bouquets and jewels showered on them besides; while the others, who work twice as hard, get wretchedly low wages. Is it true?"

I owned that it was.

"Shame on the public who will pay tribute to a certain formation of the throat or the ear! Is it not infamous that favours should go, for so hollow a reason, to many who have done nothing to earn them?"

"Eva—Abel," I exclaimed, "these are wild ravings. Infatuated children—to shackle and spoil the gifts of Providence in this barbarous way. Come with me, and let us fly to my country. There, Abel, you will be a poet, looked up to and loved by the best in the land. You, Eva, will throw Patti and Nilsson in the shade, and have all London at your feet. There the roads to perfection and honour are open, and you may hope for everything."

Another shriek from Eva, and I felt a hand on my shoulder. Turning round I saw Isotes. He was looking at me reproachfully, more in pity than in anger.

"Stranger, I arrest you in the name of the Commune."

VII.

That very night I was brought up for preliminary examination before the magistrates, charged with trying to corrupt the youth of the Commune, and entice them away from their homes.

I had no time to prepare my defence. All I could do was to reply to the questions in a straightforward manner, and as the inquiry proceeded, my answers seemed to slip out unawares.

"You were admitted to the Commune as a visitor?" "I was."

"But as a true convert to the principles of liberty and equality?" "Certainly."

"And can you deny that here the lots of all men are, as nearly as possible, equalized?" "No."

"You were taken in the act of undermining the principles you profess?"

"No—protesting against the sequestration of superior artistic powers."

"Superior! Superior powers can only belong to a few, and if allowed free play, enable a few to lift up their heads over the masses. What becomes of equality?" "You go too far. Take wealth, material wealth into your hands to be dealt out for the public good, but stop there."

They looked at each other with amusement. "Don't you perceive," said one, "that this arrangement enhances enormously the value of a capital of beauty, intellect, or imagination? Other things being equal, what chance here below has a blockhead against a man of genius?"

"But your system is unnatural."

"That we allow. If all men were born free and equal, our laws would not be necessary. But the saying is a falsehood. All men are born dependent on each other, and no two are equal. It is the glory of our State to have done away with native disparities, and brought all things to one standard."

"A standard of mediocrity," I cried, "which none are to have a chance of passing. If all must be alike, and not all can be first-rate, none can be first-rate, and what becomes of Perfection?" At this all the magistrates rose in dismay, with an outcry, "What was that word? Repeat it."

"Yes," I persisted, "that you must own. It is a miserable society that is founded on selfish principles alone, and not on charity to all and honour for what is good and great in nature and man. As for me, I can bear the sight of my betters in fortune, honour where honour is due, aspire and hope for myself. If need be, let one star differ from another in glory. But do not bar the way to excellence, because greatness is easier for some than for others. For Perfection is the goal all are to run for, though few can receive the prize."

At the word Perfection, there arose such an uproar as completely drowned my voice. I was seized, hustled out of the room into the street, dragged to the railway-station and put into a special train. Just as it started I fell asleep, exhausted. I awoke in my study, repeating—"Perfection is the goal all are to run for, though few can receive the prize."

Jack and the Bean-stalk.

I.

THERE is an undeniable fascination in pastoral music, in smock-frocks, in porches with green curtains of leaf and tendril to shade the glare of the summer's day. These pretty old villages, whatever their hidden defects may be, have at least the innocent charms of confiding lattice, arched elm-boughs, and babbling streamlets. Perhaps the clear water rushes under a wooden bridge, washing by the Doctor's garden wall, and past the village green (shady with its ancient elms, beneath which the children play and the elders stretch their tired limbs), and then travels on into green summery dells of clematis and willow light. In feudal countries a strong castle dominates each nestling hamlet; here the crowning glory of the place is the Squire's house upon the hill, or the church tower, with its flight of birds and musical old clappers sounding at intervals, and dunning and dinning the villagers to their wooden prayers, and the Squire and the Doctor to their fusty baize cushions.

At a little distance from Hayhurst (a village that answers as well to this description as any other) is Crosslane Station, where the train stops of summer evenings. When you alight upon the platform, the engine starts off again, and you find yourself in a little crowd of village folks, market carts, and baskets, and wayfarers already beginning to disperse: some follow the road that runs past pasturing slopes where the flocks are wading; others climb the stile and dip into clover fields; one little cart with a shabby white horse takes a contrary road, bleaker and less frequented. It pushes under a railway-bridge, and runs by flats and reedy marshes, and past deserted-looking farms towards an open country, where willows start into line, and distant downs mark the horizon, and far-away villages stand black against the sky.

The boy with the dark eyes, who drives the cart, is my hero, young Hans Lefevre; that low house by the common is his home; and the distant village is Foxslip, of evil reputation. It had a bad name once: thieves and wicked people were supposed to live there, and to infest the moor. Many stories were told of dark doings at the dreary little inn, which still stands on the edge of the common. Until a few years ago, there was neither church nor school, parson nor schoolmaster, in Foxslip parish. The chief land-owner was Farmer Lefevre, who, it was well known, had no money to give away; he had bills out, people said, and was hard pressed to meet them. He was a flighty, irreligious sort of man. He did nothing

for the poor; he was absorbed in his own schemes. He scoffed openly at the High Church revivalisms which were going on at Hayhurst under the Squire's patronage. On Sundays, when the wind blew westward, he used (so it was said) to go out shooting crows in church time, knowing that the Squire could hear the report of his gun as he sat in his pew, and Sir George Gorges swore he would convict him.

Farmer Lefevre was almost always in hot water with one person and another: with the Bishop, whom he accused of every crime of which a bishop is capable; with the Squire, with whom he had a standing dispute about the lease of his best fields. His father had bought them from the Squire's father years before, at a time when old Sir George was in urgent need of money. I say bought, but the old Squire was too proud to convey the land to a stranger absolutely. He had granted a lease for a term of years, and somehow or other the lease had been lost; but the Farmer declared that the Squire could produce it if he had chosen to do so. It was certain that the first Sir George had received a good sum as if for the purchase of the land, and that neither he nor his son had ever asked for any rent since the bargain was made: except indeed the almost nominal sum which the farmer paid year by year. Lefevre had also quarrelled with his wife's family. Mrs. Lefevre had been a Miss Hans, and made an unfortunate match, her relations said—so did not she—for if ever two people were happy together, Farmer Lefevre and his wife were happy and tenderly united. The Farmer, although somewhat abrupt in speech and manner, had the ways of a gentleman. He was a grand-looking man; his grandfather had come over from Normandy, and from him he had inherited the dark eyes and pale high-cut aristocratic features, that might have belonged to Squire Gorges himself, with his many quarterings and co-heiress grandmothers and great-aunts. Young Gorges, the Squire's son, with his fat, blonde, Saxon face, looked far more like a farmer's son than did Hans Lefevre, our hero, the only child of this rebellious and unpopular yeoman. Every one had a stone to throw at Farmer Lefevre. It is true he paid higher wages than the neighbouring employers; but he was a stern master, and expected a cruel day's work. He was so strong himself, he did not know what it was to feel for others. He was absorbed in his selfish money-making schemes, people said. But in all this they judged him hardly; he was working for his wife and his son and for the people who spoke so harshly of his life. He was draining and planting at great expense, and he had borrowed money to turn a feverish marsh into wholesome crop-land. He vowed he should pay himself back in good time, and would live to a hundred years, if only to spite Sir George; but his reckoning failed, he died at forty, quite suddenly, out in the hayfield one day. He had been helping his men to lift a great stack of straw, and he must have strained himself in some fatal way, for he put his hand to his heart and fell back in the sun. And at that minute the farm and fields, and all his hard work and hard savings, went back to the Squire on the hill-side. Sir George insisted

hat the lease was ended by Farmer Lefevre's death, and there was no one to dispute him. Hans was but seventeen; his mother was no match for the Squire, crushed as she was by her trouble. A great shadow of sorrow came into the little farmhouse—a passionate grief uncontrolled, sobbed away in burning tears. Emelyn Lefevre was an impulsive woman; in her own pain she forgot how cruelly she was raking the one heart that yet beat for her. She clung to Hans, who said nothing as he sat pale and shivering by her side, softly stroking her burning hands, while the poor widow poured out all her sorrow and felt relieved. But as for the boy, dearly as he loved his mother, he had loved his father still more, and this death sunk deep into his soul and into his life. He vowed to himself to win back his inheritance, but for the present he could do nothing but wait. He knew, although the others had not known, of his father's generous schemes for the people round about. He knew all that the Farmer had had at heart, and the future that he had planned when the lands were ready, and the people had learnt to earn their daily bread in honest independence, and not to receive it as a dole, crumb by crumb. But all this was over now: the cottage (it scarcely reached the dignity of a farmhouse) was their own; but the fields went back to the Squire, who offered no compensation for the money which had been sunk upon them. Sir George liked to square his accounts, and he felt that he had more than made it up with man and with his conscience when he built the pretty little Gothic church at Foxslip, out of the very first year's profit; he also erected the schools and a comfortable parsonage for his second son, who was just married, to his father's content. And so it happened that a parson had come to Foxslip, and a pony-carriage and a parsonage, and by degrees followed a pretty school-house, with weather-cocks and an inviting porch open to the road-side, and so it came about that Lady Stella teaches in the schools daily, and helps the schoolmistress with her influence and advice. And the children come regularly in the pretty little red cloaks Lady Stella has given them, and Mr. Gorges being a man of eloquence and enterprise, the devil is supposed to be exorcised from Foxslip. Some people say that being ousted in one place, he has crossed the common and taken up his abode at Hayhurst, hard by among the elms and pastures; we all know that he is said to patronise railways, and Hayhurst is nearer the station, and more convenient in many ways. Also "The Green Ladders" public house, with its lattice windows and shining oaken bar, is a far more cheerful place than the dreary little "Blue Lion" at Foxslip.

II.

Some foolish people let their lamps go out for want of tending, but there are others who choke theirs with too much oil, or who snuff them out nervously at the very moment when the light is most wanted. Mrs. Lefevre was one of these: an incomplete woman, active, impatient, inca-

pable, with a curious power of rising to the occasion and lifting herself out of difficulties (probably because she did not realise them fully), which might have overwhelmed a less sanguine nature. For many of these difficulties she had only herself to blame, and it must be confessed that she did this unsparingly, making matters only worse for poor Hans by her fits of remorse, each of which generally lasted until she had something new to lament over—the Squire's shabby conduct, and her relations' unkindness, and the price of coals, Hans' idleness, and his indifference about a profession, and her own incapacity. Why was she only a woman? And then she would look about through her tears to see what was to be done next. Very often it would have been far better if she had done nothing at all, but that was not in her nature. Hans could give her no advice. He knew nothing of the world, and he appeared to be in a sort of stupid dream for some time after his father's death. His mother worried at life, and found a mysterious comfort in the process, but the boy had inherited his father's reserve. He could not put words to feelings as his mother did. She never guessed how much he suffered, nor that his nerves had received a shock which he did not recover for some years. He grew taller and leaner every day, his eyes looked dark and troubled; people and things in general seemed to jar upon him. He tried to attend to the farm, but he soon saw that it could not pay, and his interest failed day by day. His nights were disturbed, and it required all the self-control he was capable of to go on as usual. Mrs. Lefevre suspected nothing; and yet she was a loving-hearted woman; she would have done anything in the world for Hans except leave him in peace—that indeed would have been against her nature—and while blaming her let us remember that Emelyn Lefevre had as much a right to talk as Hans had to be silent. I venture to put in this plea, though I know it is not a popular opinion.

One resource young Lefevre had, although his mother did her best to interfere with it: he was very fond of reading. He would sit contentedly hour after hour, poring over his father's old books. Mrs. Lefevre was proud of his application, but still more annoyed by his supineness at his age—nearly nineteen—and doing nothing for himself. Even Mrs. Plaskett had remarked—

"Mother, how can you!" said poor Hans, turning very red, and burying his face in the book again.

Mrs. Plaskett was the grocer's retired mother, from Hayhurst, a good old creature, with a lame leg and a pony-carriage, who was glad to do anybody's errands. She came over next day with a petition from her niece, the housekeeper at the Hall. "Five pound of fresh butter, Mrs. Lefevre, if yo' can do it, and any eggs ye can spare. Lady Gorges' hens be not a-layin', and the bride is expectit to dinner. She is to stay up at Stonnymore till her own house is ready, pretty dear. Miss Gorges do seem as pleased as her brother a'most, so my niece tells me; they are nigh of a hage; the two young ladies and Miss Gorges must be dull o' times. 'Tis a dull

house—Susy do feel it so, and talks o' bettering hersel'. Sir George he were allus a fault-finder. My Sammy tells me as how they calls him the Hogre at the 'Green Ladders.' 'Tis that Tom Parker, I'll be bound. Mrs. Millard should set her face against such rudeness. But ye seem busy to-day, ma'am, and put about; shall I come back again?"

"No, I am not more busy now than usual," said Mrs. Lefevre, looking up and down, "but I cannot trust that girl of mine to do a thing, and I have been running everywhere for Hodgetts. There is something wrong in the cow-house with the calf."

"Is not that Mr. Hans under the hoak tree? why don't ye send him to see to the poor beast?" said Mrs. Plaskett. "I took a good look at him as I passed. I didn't know him, ma'am. He will be as foine a man as his father befor long—woo-a, Jin ny."

Poor Mrs. Lefevre's eyes filled up. "He will never be what his father was," she said sendingly, as she turned to go into the house.

"Eh! poor soul, I can feel for ye," said Mrs. Plaskett, shaking her black silk bonnet. "An' yet I have been doubly blessed in Tommas and Sammy too, but I fear yon lad an' his books is no great stan' by."

"My son is all I could possibly wish," said Mrs. Lefevre, with some dignity, and she went off, not without some misgivings, to look for the eggs. Mrs. Lefevre had no false shame, and disposed of her eggs and butter with perfect self-possession to the people round about. Neither she nor they ever forgot that she was a lady born, and she might have sold ten times the amount of farm-produce without loss of prestige. But, alas, the hens, uninfluenced by proud descent, forgot to lay for days together. Something seemed wrong in the hen-house, and indeed the whole farm seemed to be dwindling and vanishing away, Hodgetts, the farm-servant, was not clever with cattle. Mrs. Lefevre sometimes suspected his honesty. Betty, the girl, was also more stupid than any one could have believed who had not seen her ways. If matters did not mend they would never be able to live there, and what was to happen to them then? Mrs. Lefevre, going into her dairy, found that the eggs had been mixed, that the butter was not set, nor the milk-pans washed out, and Betty was discovered absorbed in the contemplation of a pair of new boots with heels, the dream of months past. Mrs. Plaskett had to drive off without her complement of eggs, and Mrs. Lefevre, vexed, and flushed, and worried, walked across the field to the shady oak, underneath which Jack was lying.

"Jack, where is Hodgetts—what are you about? Do go and see to the calf. How can I do everything while you lie here at your ease? It is my own fault, I know. I have indulged you and spoilt you, and now you think of nothing but your idle pleasure—*Mill on Liberty*—what are you reading? What good will it do you? How can you spend your time on all this rubbish? I know I do not do my duty by you, but I do think you might try to be more of a comfort to—to——." Poor Mrs. Lefevre burst into tears.

Hans looked very red. "I came here to get out of Mrs. Plaskett's way. I'll go and see to the calf, mother. I'm very sorry."

"Yes, dear, do go," sobbed Mrs. Lefevre. "Oh, that your father were here; I cannot remember what he used to give the cattle. I forget everything, and perhaps it is as well that I *should* forget. Oh, what a life this is!" The poor soul leant against the tree sobbing bitterly. Life was only Emelyn Lefevre for her as she stood there in her black dress, with her widow's cap falling off. Life is only ourselves over and over again. It is you, for you, and me for me—our own perceptions meeting us again and again. Life was Hans Lefevre for the young fellow striding off on his way to the stable; a young world, troubled, rebellious, full of tender sympathy; apathetic, at times, but only at times: it was also moved by many a generous, yet silent determination and youthful impulse. Hans possessed a certain sense of self-respect and reliance, in which his mother was wanting: her very humility of temper was against her happiness. She was a good woman, conscious of failure—not the less conscious of it because she had really tried to do her duty.

III.

The poor little calf gave a gasp and died, and Mrs. Lefevre bursting into fresh tears, once more began to lament her husband's death and her hard fate. "He might have saved the poor thing," she said. "Hans! the farrier says that bottle of brandy was the worst thing we could have tried, but one had to try something, and Hodgetts is so dull, and indeed I meant for the best."

"Of course you did, mother," said her son, trying to comfort her, for he saw she was in real distress. "Everybody loses a calf now and then."

"Only we can't afford to lose a calf, and other people can," sobbed poor Mrs. Lefevre; "listen to that poor cow bellowing, and Sir George's agent wanted to buy them both only last week. Why didn't I let them go, only I could not bear to have dealings with that man? There is Patch coming for that money to-morrow, and Hodgetts' wages are due, and . . ." Hans put his arm round her and pulled her out of the stable into the little orchard, where the apple-trees and the sunset were making a glow overhead, and the flowers and green and fallen twigs, and the tangle of daisies and bright-headed buttercups, were soft under poor Emelyn's footsteps. She trod heavily, as desponding people do, while Hans, looking down into her tear-stained face, was thinking how he could help her best: she had no one else to take care of her. If only he could get work! Their farming was utter delusion, and could never be anything else. If his mother had but agreed long ago to give it all up, it would have been the better for them both, and so he tried to tell her as soon as she could listen to him. "I have calculated it all over and over again," he said. "We could make it pay still if we had the marsh fields that Sir George has robbed us of, but without the land it is impossible. Look here, mother," and he would have showed her a paper. "No, no, I can't understand—I

don't want to see," cried Mrs. Lefevre, with sudden exasperation. "It is all Sir George's wickedness. It would not matter so much if only one could trust to Hodgetts and Betty; do what you like, dear, anything, anything, what do I care so long as you are happy?" and bursting into tears once more, she ran into the house and closed the door behind her. Poor Hans went and leant over the paling, feeling anything, but happy, and staring at his own calculations.

Farming! he hated it. "It is a sort of slave-driving," thought the young fellow, "for those who can't afford to pay for their own conscience." If only he could get other work. They could certainly sell the live stock and pay their debts and have enough over to look about. The cottage was their own, they might dismiss the servants. There were grave suspicions against Hodgetts' honesty. "His honesty!" thought Hans bitterly, "on twelve shillings a week, with ten children and a sickly wife. Suppose he does steal the eggs! Doesn't Sir George steal other people's property, with his twelve thousand year? Will he have to answer for Hodgetts' ill-doings as well as his own? Not he. He is driving us from our home, but no one will blame him." Hans, in a fury, crumpled up the paper in his hand and tossed it far over the hedge. It fell at the feet of a woman who was trudging out a-field with a child crying at her skirt, but she did not stoop to pick it up. Presently an old man bent double came slowly crawling along with a load of stones. He saw it gleam in the sunset, took it up, smoothed it out, turned it over and put it down again. Hans meanwhile was pacing up and down the little box walk. He had dwelt upon the wrongs of life until sometimes all the goodness and peace in the world seemed poisoned away. Tom Parker, his confidant down at the village, was more philosophical: "It ain't no good fretting," he said; "look at me! While such people as that are in power and lord it over our 'eads, nothing can be done. But wait a bit—see if we don't get our turn; let them go a little farther and they will over-reach themselves, see if they don't—mark my words." Tom Parker was very proud of his words, and was always calling upon Hans to mark them. Before long he hoped to have a wider audience. The other did not quite follow all his mysterious hints, and could not wait to be indignant until his feelings should be paid by the column, as Tom assured him the *Excelsior* was prepared to do. (The *Excelsior* was a forthcoming organ, a voice for Tom Parker. It was a weekly newspaper that was to put everything straight: it was only waiting for the necessary funds to commence its triumphant career under the editorship of William Butcher, the well-known agitator.) What was a newspaper more or less to Hans? He was in a rage, as many a boy and girl has been before him, because they cannot command the things of life, because other minds, schemes, injustices run their course, and they can no more stop them than they can stop a miasma or poisonous vapour from spreading when once it has risen. But Hans forgot that injustice cannot exist without justice, that there are good things and good people thinking and doing

their best, as well as bad ones at their worst. Life would be sad indeed if we did not look sometimes beyond ourselves and our narrow ken. Here is one who made an effort and mourns himself a failure; here is another who unconsciously acts upon the first man's effort and counts himself successful.

As Hans leaned his disconsolate elbows upon his garden gate, he suddenly heard an unusual sound coming upon the soft gusts of the evening breeze. Was it a charm—was it a shepherd piping his flock? It was only a woman's voice, softly chaunting a sort of wild singing-tune, that shrilled and vibrated. The pathetic voice seemed to touch him curiously. He had never in his life heard anything so strange and so sweet. Then he saw two ladies come slowly walking along by the fragrant hedge that skirted the garden. One of them had pulled some of the wild roses that grew by the corner yew-tree—the other held her hat in her hand, and had turned her face to meet the sweet gorse and clover-scented breezes from across the common. There she stood, a sun-lit nymph, dressed in that pale Japanese silk which ladies have worn of late years. She sang a few notes more, then she looked round, and stopped short. "Don't let us go on; there is that man looking over his gate, Papa dislikes him so much." She spoke in a clear and vibrating voice; it was very low, but there was almost a metallic ring in its distinctness as it reached Hans' quick ears; her companion answered, but Hans did not care to listen, and with one steady look, he walked away from the gate, rather to the ladies' consternation.

"He must have heard me—did you see how he looked? Oh, Stella, what shall I do?"

"I daresay it was chance," said the other consolingly, as she turned away. "You have dropped a paper, Lina," she continued, pointing with the rose-branch.

The lady called Lina looked down, stooped and picked the paper up and turned it over. "It is very like my writing," she said.

On one side were some calculations, wages, wear and tear so much, net balance—50*l.* deficit. Then a scrap of poetry, copied from some book—

O end to which our currents tend, inevitable sea.

"What is it all about?" said the young lady, walking on with the paper in her hand; "here is some more poetry;" and then in that curious low voice of hers she began reading some lines that poor Hans had written down, though he had certainly never meant any one, except perhaps Tom Parker, to see them, least of all Lina Gorges, the golden lady in the sunset lane. She grew paler and paler as she read on. The verses were a tirade against her father, supposed to be spoken by the guilty Hodgetts.

They were written in the Hodgetts' dialect, and contained a poor man's remonstrance, very simply worded, but not the less telling for that.

It was a rough imitation of the work of the great master-hand of our own time. Hans had called his doggerel "A Mid-land Labourer," and the metre was that of the Northern Farmer.

Hodgetts told his own story and his troubles, and appealed to the great landlord to be content with all that he had already devoured—their daily bread, their strength, their own and their children's independence. He had reaped where he had not sown. Had he not taken the Farmer's own, and mulcted the widow and the fatherless? Would he not spare the common and the elm-trees that people said he was now about to enclose? Apollina's hands were trembling long before this; her heart was beating with passionate indignation. She could read no more. "How dare he; how dare he!" she cried, panting with sudden furious emotion. "My father take what was not his? My father take another man's property? Stella, you do not believe these cruel, slanderous lies? It is a wicked lie. It is a mistake—it is——" Her voice suddenly failed, and Lady Stella looking up, saw that her face was crimson, and that her head was hanging, and that great tears, like slow rain-drops in a thunder-storm, were falling from her eyes. Something had changed her; all the fire was gone; all the anger. "We must send this back," she said in an altered voice, that sounded faint and toneless somehow. "Stella, will you see that young man? Will you give it him? I cannot. Tell him to destroy it—never to let any one see those cruel words." They met Sir George at the park gate. He chucked his daughter under the chin, but she only fixed her strange grey eyes upon him without smiling, and looked steadily into his face.

"What are you thinking of, child?" said he. "Come home. Mr. Crockett is here. I brought him back to dinner."

Lina gave a little shudder, but did not answer.

IV.

How shall I describe Sir George's daughter? She herself was somehow puzzled to find herself so unlike her home, her education, her father and mother. Where had she come from? From which of the framed grandmothers had she inherited her peculiar organization? They had not been chary of their gifts. One had given her her name: a legacy for which Apollina Gorges was by no means grateful. She called herself Lina, and made the best of it; another had bestowed upon her her beautiful golden hair. A third had bequeathed her beautiful hands and arms, and a harp and a voice of rarest and sweetest quality, although it had the peculiarity that some notes were almost entirely missing. Lina could not consequently sing all sorts of music, Scotch and Irish melodies suited her best. This beautiful creature stood somewhat above the usual height of women. She was slight and straight. Even in the days of peroline she never gave in to the fashion. Her clothes used to

fall in long folds to the ground. She had regular features : some people said they were inanimate, and reproached her with being stiff and motionless, and also with having one shoulder a little higher than the other and a head too small for her body. But say what they would, they could not deny her beauty ; she herself did not care for her own good looks, but she was pleased with her beautiful hands and feet, and her serenity was not above being tempted by smart little slippers embroidered in gold, and quite unsuitable for anything but the glass cases in which the shoemaker kept them. Those who called her stiff did not know her, for she was one of those shy, but responsive people, who do not make advances ; she was spirited, with a touch of melancholy : sometimes silent for hours together, sometimes suddenly excited. A word was almost enough ; she would respond to a touch, as people say. It was a nervous and highly-strung nature, too impressionable for its own happiness in life. At times Miss Gorges seemed to wrap herself up in an outer case of abstraction. Very impressionable people are obliged sometimes in self-defence to oppose some sort of armour to the encroachments of too excitable feelings, and abstraction comes in the place of other qualities to give rest to exhausted nature. Lina was not perfect I must admit ; she was cross sometimes, and very sensitive to the changes of weather ; she was obstinate with all her sensibility, and would harp upon one idea ; a storm set her quivering and almost beside herself ; even a heavy fall of rain would put her nerves ajar, and untune her for several hours. She was not very active in her habits ; her father would have liked her to show more taste for country pursuits, but she rarely went beyond her pretty morning-room or her wood on the lawn outside. This walk with her sister was a very exceptional event, only Lady Stella could have brought her so far from home. Lina did not seem very happy. She was not so happy as she ought to have been, but then it was the habit of the house to be silent and constrained, especially in Sir George's presence, and Lina had lived there for twenty years, and had learnt the habit. Lady Gorges set the example. She was afraid of her husband ; even for her children's sake she had never attempted to hold her own with him, and if people weakly give in time after time, deceiving themselves and their own inclinations, acting long-continued and tacit lies against their own natural impulses, nature revenges herself upon them in one way or another. Lady Gorges had shrunk from righteous battle ; now she was a sad and spiritless woman ; her life was one terror ; her husband had some curious influence over her which seemed to paralyse the poor thing : she would start and tremble when he spoke to her suddenly. She was a pale, stout woman, with fair hair, and some remains of beauty still. Harold, her second son, resembled her. He was her favourite child ; Jasper, the eldest, looked too like his father for the poor lady to feel quite at ease in his company. Lina also greatly preferred Harold to her eldest brother ; she was not a little excited when she heard of his engagement. And the very first day that her brother's

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wife came in smiling, all through the great folding drawing-room doors, Lina was very sure that she should love her sister-in-law.

As for Lady Stella, she was a happy woman, people said; there were few who did not love her. She was brown-eyed, russet-haired, tall and slender. She was something like a Raphael lady who is, I believe, at this very minute hanging to a nail in the National Gallery; but if one may judge by the placid looks of that serene Madonna, the Englishwoman had far more animation and interest in her expression. She seemed to be able to bear with life gently, and yet to hold firmly withal to what she had once determined—she had that *pearly* manner some women have, a tender grace, and a certain charm of gentle confidence in her destiny that won all those whom she chose to elect to her friendship. Poor Apollina Gorges often envied her in a responsive, admiring sort of way. Most of all she envied her perhaps for the ease with which she held her own in the home where poor Lina herself had little power of so doing. Lady Stella was younger than Miss Gorges, but she came of a large and united family. Brothers and sisters, and sympathies of warm friends, often stand in the place of years of experience, and give the confidence that others only gain with age. Lady Stella knew far more of the world outside Stoneymoor park gates than did poor Miss Gorges at the time when those gates opened wide to welcome the sunshiny bride to her husband's home—so for want of a better word he called it.

Lady Stella brought a good portion of brightness and sweet temper, but not much beside. Mr. Gorges was not ungrateful for this pleasant dowry. He was surprised and enchanted by the way in which she took her place, meeting his father's gloomy authority, his mother's silence and coldness, and Apollina's alternate reserves and outpourings with perfect sweetness, and a courage he had never attained to. If Lady Stella's courage failed her in the first days of her stay at Stoneymoor Court no one ever knew it, except perhaps Lady Mary, her confidante, an invalid sister, who had long been established as the family prescriber and sympathiser. Sir George was a bully by nature. What else could he be, with his fierce eyebrows, his thin lips, tightly drawn over a set of gleaming false teeth, and his tendency to suppressed gout? Nobody had ever said "No" to him. The first time that Lady Stella contradicted him, with one of her pretty little smiles, there was a sudden terror and silence in the room. Lady Gorges gave one scared glance at the butler, in her confusion. Sir George, who was crunching a lark, gulped the little creature, bones and all, in surprise. Lady Stella went on as if she noticed nothing, looked up at him with those clear eyes of hers. "I think Harold ought to investigate the subject," she said. "Mr. Bridges came down to my father's village, and I know my father attended the meeting." "Your father can do as he likes," shouted Sir George. "My tenants know that I am not to be trifled with."

V.

Foxslip Wood in summer time is a delightful place—green to the soul. The *suggestions* of natural things have often seemed as much a part of their charm as the actual beauties we admire. Beyond the coppice here and there where the branches broke asunder, sweet tumults of delicate shadowy hills were flowing, gleams of light cloud, the pine-tops and the nut-leaves rustled, voices of birds, of insects, or streamlets broke the silence, tinklings from the flocks a-field, whistlings of crickets.

The wordless distraction was very grateful to Hans as he came striding along the narrow pathway, crushing the leaves and driving occasional fir-cones before him. He had been to the agent, and had sold his poor cow and the white pony, and he was disconsolately turning the money in his pocket, and thinking of the agent's disagreeable sneer as he had handed it over, of his mother's reluctance, of trouble a-head, of the squirrels up in the trees. Hans was young enough to be able to think of the squirrels as well as of his cares. We older people, I think, make a mistake in thinking care more sensible and important than it really is. We let the squirrels leap by unnoticed, while we are anxiously pondering upon the ditch, six fields off, perhaps. Poor Hans went on his way, whistling the tune he had heard Miss Gorges singing the day before. He was a slim, brown-faced young fellow, dressed in the not unbecoming dress of a country farmer. He had a short coat and leather gaiters, and a sprig of heather in his felt hat. He carried a stick in his hand. He might have been any one—leather gaiters are not distinctive, and are as useful to a Duke as to a farmer. Hans walked along as if the whole wood belonged to him, instead of a tumble-down cottage and forty pounds in silver and county notes, to keep him and his mother for all the rest of their lives. A little adventure befel him presently. As he reached the end of the wood he thought he heard his name called, and looking round he saw a lady sitting under the great Spanish walnut-tree that guards its entrance (you can see it for miles across the common). A lady or a fairy is it?—Alas! there are no real fairies in such stories as mine.

If this is a fairy, she is the size of life, and looks very like Lady Stella of the Madonna face. She is dressed in the quaint and fanciful costume that English ladies were beginning to assume some ten years ago. On her dainty head a high-crowned hat is set. The feather is fastened by a star, that glitters and shines like steel in the sunlight; her pretty white saque is looped over a crimson satin petticoat; her pretty little feet twinkle in buckles and high-heeled shoes; in her hand she holds a long-sticked parasol, which she is waving to attract the young man's attention. Hans comes up with wondering eyes, for he recognises one of the ladies he saw go by the gate—not she who sang, but the other. He had been thinking of them only a minute ago, although he had not expected to meet either of them so soon again. There sat the lady on the moss, comfortably installed, leaning against the trunk of the tree.

"I wanted to speak to you," she said, in a very sweet voice. "Come here. I shall not detain you a minute:" and as Hans stood before her, looking surprised, she blushed and explained with sweet upturned eyes, "I should have called at the farm to-day, but I have to go to the duke's christening fête. I am waiting for my pony-carriage; I walked on; it is to catch me up. I have something of yours, Mr. Lefevre," and Lady Stella then put her hand in her pocket and pulled out an envelope addressed to Hans, in a handwriting so like his own, that he was still more puzzled. "My sister-in-law, Miss Gorges, picked up a paper, and read it by mistake, and asked me to ask you——" (The fairy became a little embarrassed.)

"I am the rector's wife," she said, starting afresh. "It gave Miss Gorges the greatest pain to think any one could so misjudge her father, whom she loves dearly, and she requests you to burn the poem, and to remember in future that Sir George has only done what he felt right and just, and that it is dangerous to draw cruel and hasty conclusions."

"Right and just!" burst out Hans. "Do you know the stories people tell, do you know the state of things all about? He turns us out of our land: do you know what sum my grandfather paid for it? Has he ever told you the terms of the bargain?" Hans named a sum so large, that Lady Stella looked down.

It was most uncomfortable and distressing. The poor lady was longing to think well all round, but she began to be troubled. Her husband, to whom she had spoken, had looked very grave and said that he knew nothing about the transaction, but that he often took a different view from his father upon business questions, but Lina's passionate asseverations had reassured her, and Lady Stella had meant to scold the boy gently, listen to his story if he had one, and explain away any misconception.

"But surely," she faltered, changing her ground, "you cannot think it right for a young man as you are, to attack an old man like my father-in-law, impute every dishonourable action to him, turn him into ridicule. You have given Miss Gorges more pain than you can have any notion of, and to me also."

"As for the verses," said Hans loftily, "I never meant any one to see them; I have no other copy, and I'm sure I do not know how they came into Miss Gorges' hands. You say they are enclosed in that"—as he spoke he tore the envelope into two or three pieces—"you cannot expect me," he went on with some rising anger, "to give up my honest right to my father's and grandfather's property; and when the day comes I shall most certainly try to claim it. I am very sorry indeed," he added, turning a little pale, "to give Miss Gorges any pain; I will never do anything that is not in fair open dealing: but I and my mother are ruined. We have hardly anything in the world left of all that was ours: I must think of her as well as of myself. You cannot ask me to make no effort to regain what I sincerely believe to be our own."

Lady Stella was more and more surprised and embarrassed. Her own

brother could not have spoken better, more quietly, more courteously; with all her liberality she was half angry at the young man's persistence, and yet half won by his evident sincerity and moderation of manner.

"I am sure you are mistaken, and some day you will be sorry for your unjust suspicions," she said, warmly; "but anyhow, if ever I or my husband can be of any help to you in any way—will you"—her voice softened, she put out her kind hand—"count upon us? He might advise you, and I have some little influence; you must be started in the world and get on better than you ever could now. I am sure that before long you will retrieve your—your fortune, and make your mother as proud as I hope my son will some day make me." She said it so sweetly, that Hans was completely disarmed; he could not find words to thank her.

The pony-carriage came up before he could speak. "Thank you for tearing the verses," she said, starting to her feet; "I shall tell my sister. And mind you come and see me. I shall expect you. Good-by, Mr. Lefevre," and with a kind, grave smile, the fairy drove off, brandishing her whip.

VI.

Hans walked on homewards, jingling the money in his pocket and thinking over this curious little interview. Had he pained them, those kind ladies? Should he go? He thought not; but he kept wondering what she was like at home. That sweet young lady! who would ever dream of imputing ill-meaning to her? Hans seemed to be in demand. As he passed "The Green Ladders," he saw Tom Parker, who had been away for some time, and who was now safely returned, standing with his hands in his pockets and his favourite stock in his button-hole, and a hat cocked on one side of his red shock head, looking more vulgar and important even than usual. "Here, Lefevre, I want to speak to you"—and stepping forward, he beckoned him mysteriously a little on one side. It was to tell Hans something that he had already told him more than once. There was to be a meeting of agricultural labourers held almost immediately in the bar-room of the little public. "We have secured Bridges; I am to say a few words myself," said Tom. "We asked Mr. Gorges, but I don't suppose he will care to come—too near home," said Tom with a chuckle. "You had better look in, Lefevre; what is the use of shutting your ears and eyes to what is happening? There's nothing to be done single-handed, union is everything; why, I don't despair of seeing our man in Parliament before we've done. By Jove, Lefevre, if I were you, I shouldn't lag behind. I have put your name down as a member of our Hillford Club. The Reds and Greens you know. We have got our organ at last. . . . I didn't tell you before, that is what I have been about."

"An organ," said Hans, bewildered.

"Yes, weekly; first-rate—the *Excelsior*. There was an indirect

reply to my leading article in the first number see *Daily Telegraph* of yesterday—mentions no names, you know, but it is easy to know who it is aimed at."

"Do you write the leaders?" Hans asked, somewhat dazzled.

"That I am not at liberty to say," said Tom. "The editor alone knows and is responsible for the authorship of each article; Butcher—don't you know him?—a very remarkable man, I can tell you. He wants to make your acquaintance; he was very much struck by a conversation I repeated, and with your views upon agriculture. He is here."

Hans blushed up; it was flattering to hear that such a man as Mr. Butcher was interested in him.

"Do you think," he asked hesitating, "that if I were to send a few notes I have put down, there would be any chance of your getting them inserted into the paper?"

"Can't say, I'm sure," said Tom, absently looking up and down the road. Five or six labourers were coming up in their smocks and Sunday coats.

"Hillo! the Parson, by Jove!" said Tom, suddenly.

"These are the people whose bitter tyranny brings things to our present state," said a small man, coming up in shiny new clothes. "I don't think your young ogre would look so sleek if he could hear some of the things that will be said to-day concerning him and the old ogre—eh, Parker?"

Hans looked up as the new comer spoke, and saw the new clergyman coming along the lane. A little procession was following; labouring-men stumping along, or hobbling or trudging, according to their various loads of years, rheumatics, cares, hard work. The new married clergyman seemed pretty free as yet from any of these overweights; and able to bear his quarter of a century with ease and hopefulness; his heart beat warmly, the sunlight was in his path, and his steps came straight and prosperous. Tom waited until Mr. Gorges caught him up, then he jostled somewhat rudely against the incumbent as he passed and sent some dust flying. Hans blushed up and made way with a little bow. He had not bargained for rudeness. He would have liked to apologize as he thought of the gentle look of Lady Stella's brown eyes.

"Is the meeting to-day?" said Mr. Gorges to Hans.

"We are all on our way there now," said Hans. "I am glad you think of coming, for it concerns us all."

Mr. Gorges looked up surprised as his wife had done. The young man answered him in a quiet voice; but it was clear and well modulated. He spoke as if he had been one of the prosperous ten thousand.

"I had not really—a—made up my mind about going," said Mr. Gorges, looking a little embarrassed. "You see my position is difficult; I don't want to show any bias one way or another," Harold went on floundering, for he saw a look of something like scorn on the young man's dark face, and a sneer in that of the two others standing near. Hans

looked away into the first battered face that went by; what chance had these poor clowns, measured against such prosperous plausible antagonists? For an instant he had thought this man was bringing his prosperity to the help of these unfortunates. He had misread the kind glances.

"I beg your pardon," Hans said; "I thought clergymen were by way of showing a bias in favour of those who want helping. I didn't know; I am only a farmer, and a very unsuccessful one;" and he walked on and caught up Tom Parker, who was laughing to himself.

"Well! here you are. There ain't anything to be got out of *them*; I could have told you so, only you wouldn't believe me. Cold-blooded sneaks, hard-hearted tyrants, we will teach them our power. Once set the *Excelsior* at 'em, you will see the old ogre down on his marrow-bones yet," and Tom cocked his straw hat and marched in through the narrow passage which led to the old sale-room at "The Green Ladders," where a deal table with a glass of water and a few rickety old benches were prepared.

"Here, set down by me," said Tom. "I am a-going to say a few words; but what's words—perhaps a dozen on 'em may 'ear them and all the good seed's throw'd away. Our organ is the real thing to give us the power, and we will use it, see if we don't. . . . Look here, Hans," he said confidentially. "I am speaking as a friend; you take your four ten-pound shares—I know you have the money by you—we give you six per cent. interest to begin with, and a fair share of all the dividends, besides paying you for any occasional leaders or lighter articles that you may wish to contribute. Your fortune's made; you are no farmer, my boy; forgive me, you never will make anything out of the land; but you have brains, and you know it, and take my advice and look to them for the crops."

Perhaps if there had only been Tom Parker and Butcher the agitator, in his shiny new clothes, to address the meeting, this story would never have been written. Hans was sorely tempted by Tom's proposal; but the thought of his mother's distress held him back, and yet, was it reasonable to refuse a good offer, made by a tried friend, because she was nervous and Tom's manners were bad? Hans looked up at his friend as he stood gasping and spluttering over his speech, grateful for a prompting word from Hans, who had quickly thrown himself into the spirit of the thing, and felt ready to make a speech himself before Tom had finished his first sentence. When Parker finished, to a tune of hobnails and shuffling, Mr. Butcher, the spirited proprietor of the *Excelsior*, took up the theme. He was an agitator by profession, and made his living by the wrongs of others; he was secretary to the Reds and Greens, a newly organized Radical club. His glib fluent sentences rolled out as a matter of course. Bitterly true they were, but some truths seem almost like falsehoods in some people's mouths, vague, meaningless. Hans knew every detail to be accurate in the main, but he listened unmoved. The unfairness and one-sidedness of it all repelled him.

He did not care to throw in his venture with such a man as this, and he grasped his forty pounds tight in his pocket.

Butcher sat down, mopping up his face, and then Mr. Bridges came forward. Hans had heard of him before, and looked up with some curiosity.

This was a middle-aged strong-set man, with a powerful honest face and a powerful honest voice. He spoke with a slight country accent that was not disagreeable; on the contrary, it seemed to give point and character to his sentences, which came slowly and thoughtfully, rolling true to their mark. It seemed to some of those who listened that it was not one man speaking; it was the voice of a whole generation of men and women who were telling the manner of their daily life, of their daily wants.

The man who was speaking had lived through it all himself, and had felt hunger and biting cold, and seen his little children suffer. He had been in and out of other cottages besides his own, where the same cruel laws of want, cold, hunger, were imposed by circumstance, by custom, by thoughtless platitudes. He had seen little children overtasked and put to labour unfitted to their strength; he had seen women working in the fields, and their little babies of three weeks old brought out through the bitter wind, because the father could not, toiling early and late, earn enough alone for the home, not even if he had worked all the twenty-four hours of the day. He had seen men crippled and starved into premature old age, and as he spoke more than one of those present glanced at old Frank Conderell, crawling in, doubled up, and scarce able to stand: he was not sixty years old, but he looked a hundred. Bridges went on, not very bitterly, but clearly and to the point; it had been the custom, but there was no reason why the custom should remain. These men had been systematically underpaid, underfed, from no special unkindness and ill-will, but from the habit of the employers and the habit of resignation. But why should they resign themselves any longer to so cruel a state? why consent to work for wages that did not represent the work nor anything nearly equivalent? Others had found out the strength of unity before this; "and I call upon all of you men," he said, "to unite, for the good of your children and of your self-respect and liberty, and to demand the increase of wages which most justly belongs to you. I myself have been without a loaf o' bread to set before my little ones, dismissed at a minute's notice, and with no redress. The magistrates won't convict the ma-asters, we have tried it again and again.

"Why, a pair of boots cost fourteen shillin', and a man's wages in some parts are twelve and thirteen shillin' a week. . . . I have seen people sore put to it," cried the orator, for he was an orator, "and my heart has bled for those unhappy children, doomed to toil, to lives of suffering and insufficiency. People talk of the glories of England; these are among the sorrows of our most unhappy country."

Nobody moved or spoke for an instant. Mr. Gorges had slipped in

unperceived in the midst, and was sitting listening—a sense of wrong had come to some of the poor fellows present for the first time. Joe Blake got tipsy at the bar before he went home on the strength of his newly-awakened rights. Butcher beckoned Hans aside as the meeting dispersed.

“You have heard him,” he said, eagerly; “will you join us? will you help these poor creatures and benefit yourself at the same time? There is the organ waiting; it only wants wind and muscle, and money is muscle. . . Give me your hand; Parker has vouched for you. A guinea a week to begin with, and six per cent.”

Bridges came up at that moment with his earnest face.

“Are you a farmer and on our side, sir?” he said; “I wish with all my heart, there were more such as you.”

When the meeting was over, and Hans came home, pale and moved, in the twilight, and knocked at his mother’s door, she ran to open and met him with open arms. The time had seemed long, and her heart had been yearning for him.

“Well, dear,” she said, eagerly, “where have you been, and you have sold the cow—and have you got the money?”

“Better than that, mother,” said Hans, with beaming happy eyes. “I think I see my way to a livelihood, to comfort you, and something I scarce care to do.”

“What is it, dear?” said the widow, eagerly.

Jack put his hand into his pocket and brought out four slips of pink paper: they were four shares in the *Excelsior* newspaper. Poor Mrs. Lefevre gave a loud cry of despair.

When Hans awoke next morning, Tom Butcher was standing outside tapping at his bedroom window. “Here are the proofs of the report of the meeting,” he cried; “the man sat up all night to put them into type.”

VII.

Lady Stella Gorges to her sister, Lady M. Milwarden.

Foxslip Rectory, September 18th, 18—.

I have not much to tell you since I last wrote, my dearest Mary. Dear Baby is well, the carpets and curtains are spreading by degrees, the garden is getting into order, the new cook is a success. I am quite charmed with my pretty new house and Sir George’s kindness and liberality. He has just been here promising to build me a dairy. I cannot think how it was I was so afraid of him when I first saw him. Harold and Lina had made me shy, I think, but although my husband laughs at me for my cheerful views of life and people, he owns that he did not do his father justice, and I do begin to hope that in future they will all understand one another better than they have done hitherto. Sir George is peculiar, but I am sure he is really warm-hearted; he has been most kind about the rectory—consulted us about everything, done everything we wished,

and let us come here just when we began to feel the want of a home of our own. Of course we were very happy at Stoney-moor Court, but must confess that it is a relief to be in one's own house, to ring one's own bell, order one's own dinner, open the window, send for baby at all hours of the day, and trot out the little ponies at five minutes' notice instead of solemnly making up one's mind to a drive the day before. Lady Gorges came yesterday with Lina. The visit went off very well; we had five-o'clock tea in the morning room; the view was looking lovely, the purple moor, the nutwoods, the cows munching in the meadow, the distant farmhouse buried in its elms and stacks: Beancroft Farm, where that poor man used to live who wanted to go to law about his lease. Did I ever tell you about him? I cannot exactly understand the rights of the story; I am afraid Sir George is a little difficult to convince at times. The widow still keeps the farm, though the land reverted to us—to Sir George, I mean, at the farmer's death, and the lawsuit was avoided. The Rectory is built upon one of the fields, and the garden (which certainly is wonderfully productive and succeeds admirably—we have been most fortunate in our gardener) was drained out of a marsh by Lefevre himself—I felt quite grateful to him to-day when I saw Baby's ecstasies over the honeysuckles. (I assure you that children begin to observe everything at two months old.) I should like you to know a young man, the farmer's son, who interests me very much. He sometimes comes to see me. I am sure he will make a name for himself. He is very clever and very handsome; he writes in a horrid vulgar newspaper called the *Excelsior*, which has had the most extraordinary success. Harold likes it, but Sir George cannot bear the sight of it. He wrote an angry letter to the Editor, a short time ago, which all the county papers took up, and they say it nearly doubled the sale of the *Excelsior*.

Poor Lina misses Baby dreadfully, she says. Lady Gorges is not fond of children. Dearest Mary, do they wind her up on Tuesdays with the clocks? Hushsh, you say. Peggy brought Baby in to see her grandmother, and Lady Gorges never looked at the child. No wonder poor Lina looks sad sometimes, and my heart aches for her when I think of our own mother, and all the love and warmth of our old home. It was everywhere, and lasted all day long; it tucked us up in bed, and seemed to come shining in of a morning. Dear Mary, I like to think my children will inherit some of our mother's love, though they will never have known her. You will be interested in the schools; they are beautifully arranged, with dear little children (only that I have such a horror of Baby's catching any infectious illness, I would let him go and play with them when he is older). Hannah Gourlay is a real treasure of a mistress. I have only seen her once. She came to thank me for furnishing the room in the schoolhouse, but I told her it was your doing, not mine. It is very nice to see people who have seen you, dearest Molly. When am I going to see you? Meanwhile I shall go on writing;

but I must finish for to-day, for it is post-time, and Lina is coming for me in the pony-carriage.

Your S. G.

Letters are storybooks written for one particular person, and story-books attempt, in some measure, to represent life without its attendant restrictions of time and space. What are miles to the writer? years fly before his pen, estates are enclosed within the fold of a page. Three months had passed since Hans purchased his pink shares from Tom Butcher. To everybody's surprise, the *Excelsior*, as Lady Stella said, was a most extraordinary success. The Reds and Greens were a powerful community; and their paper, which had been on the very verge of ruin when Hans' 40l. came to start it again, was now a recognised power in the county, paying ten per cent. dividend. Hans had certainly, as his mother said, wasted a great deal of time over his books; it turned to some profit now that he was farming ideas and pens and ink instead of oats and beans. He was himself more surprised at his own success than anybody else.

There are some people who all their lives long have to be content with half-brewed ale, the dregs of the cup, envelopes, cheese-parings, fingers of friendship. To take the lowest place at the feast of life is not always so easily done as people imagine. There are times and hours when everybody is equal, when even the humblest nature conceives the best, and longs for it, and cannot feel quite content with a part. You may be courageous enough to accept disappointment, or generous enough not to grudge any other more fortunate, but to be content demands something tangible besides courage or generosity.

Hitherto Hans had been anything but happy. He did not like his work, or his position in life: he had grown bitter over the wrongs he saw all about, and could not mend. Now he seemed to see hope dawning; but his mother's incredulity was very distressing. She loved him, but could not believe in him. She admired in secret, but certainly her talk was not encouraging. He wanted to improve the condition of the people round about! As if an inexperienced boy could do anything. Why had he not tried his hand upon Hodgetts? How could he write about things in which, he must confess, he had failed utterly. "If reformers would only try their hand at their own work. . . . Your dear father never neglected *his*, nor complained of his position," continued Mrs. Lefevre, with a sigh. "And I'm sure I never regretted the step I took when I became a farmer's wife, and left my own sphere" (Mrs. Lefevre's sphere had revolved in the pestle and mortar of a suburban apothecary); "but indeed, dear, I have often thought how much better it would have been for you if your father had married somebody more able to be of use, more—What is that singing, Hans?"

"It is the chapel, mother," said Hans. "This is their Thursday meeting."

Hans and his mother had been wandering along the road, in the cool

of the evening, and gone on farther than they had intended. Hans was bareheaded. Mrs. Lefevre had only thrown a shawl over her head : it was early still : the meeting was held at six o'clock, and it had only just begun as Lady Stella and Miss Gorges drove by in their basket carriage, on their way home to dinner at the Rectory. Lady Stella stopped the horse for an instant to shake hands with Hans and to speak to Mrs. Lefevre. "We were to have met Sir George," she said ; "have you seen him go by?"

Mrs. Lefevre said "No" so curtly that Lady Stella blushed and drove on ; as for Miss Gorges, she had not spoken, but had sat quietly looking at Hans with curious pale blue sympathetic glances. Somehow they seemed to magnetize him ; a vague something seemed to strike some mysterious chord as he watched her. When Lady Stella blushed, her sister-in-law turned pale, and Hans thought that in her eyes there seemed to be some odd look of understanding, of apology ; it must have been fancy ; it was too absurd. She seemed to be there even after the carriage had turned the corner of the lane, still looking at him.

"She looks proud enough," said Mrs. Lefevre, indifferently ; "what is it they are singing?" Hans did not answer. The two had stopped for a minute to listen to the hymn which came mingling pleasantly with evening honeysuckle and clover scents. It was a cheerful sort of strain ; very different from the drawling moan of the little Sunday scholars—old Caleb Ferrier, the shepherd, seemed to be leading, and the whole congregation was joining in, nodding time and clapping books and elbows in the most inspiriting manner. These people were certainly singing their own song and praying their own prayers in this little square brick box, and asking for the things they really wanted for themselves and their families, instead of for those things which other people had thought necessary for them. Other people, such as archbishops who had never worked all day long in a stubble-field ; high court councillors who had never eaten their wives' hunch of bread in their hungry need.

Tom Parker in a corner by the pulpit was very prominent, with a stock in his button-hole and a hymn-book, flourishing the time ; he glanced over his shoulder at the open door of the meeting-house and caught Hans' eye, but he went on singing.

"An' win our glorry errowns," shouted Tom in chorus, "as we go marching on ;" "And we'll march, and we'll march, an' win our glorry errowns," sang the old shepherd, and the clerk, and the minister, and Mr. Nangles, and his three daughters. The whole chapel seemed inspired by the cheerful tune, and if living a good life only consisted, as the hymn-books tell us, in marching about in bands to music, the congregation seemed well advanced on its way to the New Jerusalem.

Mrs. Lefevre felt she ought to say something to counteract the effect of the hymn tune, but somehow it had cheered her up too as she listened, and it seemed ungrateful to complain just at that moment : still she could not resist a little sneer at Tom Parker. "Did you see him with that enormous nose-gay?" she said as she walked away.

"How you can bear to spend whole evenings with him or that man Bridges at that horrid 'Green Ladders,' as you do—I am sure Sir George must think——"

"What do I care what he thinks—if he did think," cried Hans. "Bridges is a noble fellow, and if he had ten thousand a year he would do more in a week to set things right than the old ogre has done harm in all his wicked life."

"Hush!" said Mrs. Lefevre, and Hans, looking up, heard a horse's foot strike the road. It was Sir George, who gave a disagreeable sort of grin, shewing all his great teeth, and rode on.

Sir George had delayed—he had a special reason for delay—but all must be settled now; and leaving Foxslip behind, he went placidly journeying along the road. His well-equipped groom cantered behind.

It seemed an odd arrangement of fate by which all these tranquil and gentle things belonged to this fierce old man. Sloping shadows, waving coppice, soft prismatic tints and pasture land and pleasure lawn; the manor-house, rising above the elm heads, and the distant farms of which the gables were peeping through the nutwoods. The very nuts in their little wooden cases were Sir George's, and the birds' eggs in their mossy nests. Little Jeff Ferrier, panting along the road from Hayhurst, had some of the Baronet's property in his trowsers' pockets as he scrambled out of the horse's way. Sir George threw him a copper and rode on—he was in an amiable mood. He had struck his grand blow, and would now prove to his tenantry that they could not hold revolutionary meetings with impunity on his estate. They incited his labourers to strike; did they? He would show them who was master, and that he was Lord of the Manor, and if he chose to cut down the trees and enclose the common for building purposes nobody could prevent him. Something else had put him into good humour with all the world, with his own daughter especially, that morning; and Jeff Ferrier owed his copper to no less an event than an interview between Sir George and Mr. Crockett, the new owner of Trembleton Court, "who had come forward in the most gentlemanly manner," said Sir George to his wife, "and really Lina could not do better."

Poor Lady Gorges! her heart failed her, for Lina had declared in secret that nothing would induce her to do so well for herself as to marry the owner of Trembleton.

A minute later the little ploughboy came up to Hans panting and dusty. "Be grandfayther in the-ar, I say? mother wa-ants him. I werr to bring 'im quick, and Mr. Parrrker tu." Jeff Ferrier was ahead of the usual village urchins and could take a message on an emergency, but it was difficult to make out what he wanted now, so excited and breathless was he. "The trees, they'se cuttun our trees," he repeated, with his little gooseberry eyes starting out of his head. "They'se broake oop grand-fayther's bench where 'a sits Soonday," said Jeff, still panting. "Goa and see for ye'sell, can't ye? Mother said some one were to stoap 'un."

Hans began to understand, and without another word he walked back a few paces, and going to the chapel door, beckoned out his friend. Then Jeff was called up, and after a minute's consultation Hans and Tom Parker set off running across the fields. As the two young men hurried along in hot haste, they met Sam Plackett meandering along the fields talking to his sweetheart; at a few words from them, he left that disconsolate damsel to follow as best she could, and set off running too. Hans hurried on first with gleaming eyes, and as he reached the green he saw that his suspicions were only too real: one great noble tree lay helpless, with all its shady branches outspread and quivering still, upon the grass. The men had got their ropes round a second tree: birds were flying from the branches, widow Barnes was weeping piteously and clinging to the bailiff's arm; one or two little children were looking on scared, so were a couple of young men from the public-house.

The bailiff paid no attention to widow Barnes but a more serious obstacle standing in the midst of this group was the Rectory pony-carriage, in which sat Lady Stella. Miss Gorges had jumped out and was standing in front of the great fallen tree.

"My father could not have intended that you should do such a thing," cried the girl in her ringing voice. "Mr. Mason, I beg you as a personal favour to tell these men to leave off."

"Yes, Mr. Mason," cried Lady Stella, "it must be a mistake."

"I am sure, ma'am, my lady," said Mr. Mason, turning distracted from one to another, "I am very sorry, I—— Sir George was positive in his orders. I myself think it a pity; but——"

"A pity! it's a shame," cried Miss Gorges, "to cut down these noble old trees. I am sure no one has any right to do so," she cried, more and more excited, in a vibrating voice.

"Ain't it a shame, Miss?" sobbed widow Barnes, with many a memory in her old heart of young life and courting days, and long years passed beneath the shade.

The agent looked bewildered from Miss Gorges to Lady Stella, who still sat in the little carriage, to Hans and his companions, who were looking very resolute, and who had quietly surrounded the doomed tree and the men at work upon it.

"Here is Sir George," said Mason, much relieved and looking up the road.

Lina gave a little cry, and ran forward to meet her father. In her excitement the strings of her bonnet had come untied and were flying behind her mixed with her long golden curls. Hans never forgot her as he saw her that day. She was moved, thrilled out of her usual silence; as with clasped hands and streaming eyes she stood entreating her father to forbid the men from going on with their work of destruction.

"Nonsense, nonsense," granted the Baronet; "why have you delayed, Mason? Miss Gorges does not understand. Get into your carriage, Lina, and drive home. It is a matter of business. You have nothing to do here."

Lina was trembling, but she still persisted in her entreaties.

"Get into your carriage and go home, I tell you," hissed the Baronet through his great yellow teeth.

Lady Stella bit her lip with indignation; Lina, paler and paler, seemed ready to faint.

"Papa, I——" The words died away on Lina's lips, her father paid no heed to what she said, for something else now came to withdraw his attention. This something was no less than a reinforcement of the villagers with sticks and pitchforks, who had suddenly at a signal from Hans surrounded the remaining trees.

"This is our property, you have no legal right whatever for what you are doing. I defy you to prove your right to our common land," shouted young Lefevre in a loud voice. His eyes were sparkling, his nostrils were open, his head was thrown back; no young warrior ever flew to arms with a nobler and more determined aspect. They all felt instinctively that Hans was their leader; he had got the men together, by magic almost, and now he stood among them alight in his youth and in the undaunted vigour of his generous scorn.

"You miserable men," he said to the woodmen, "cutting down your own inheritance, coming here to spoil your neighbour's. What has that man ever done for you or for your children that you should consent to do this dirty job for him?"

"Go on with your work," roared Sir George.

"The trees are sold, Sir George has contracted for them, and you understand a gentleman's word," said Mr. Mason, still apologizing.

Hans gave a glance of scorn and amusement, his men closed in, and one of the woodmen sulkily flung down his saw.

"I'll be d——d if I go on with this here job."

The other two followed his example; in vain Sir George cursed and fumed at Mason.

"Come, Lina, come," said Lady Stella of the burning cheeks, and Lina, deadly pale, turned round, and with downcast, shame-stricken looks got into the carriage again. As the two ladies drove off along the bend of the road which passed the place where the resolute young men were still keeping guard, Hans heard a low long sort of sobbing sigh that touched him profoundly.

Then, in a little more, the green was deserted, the widow's donkey came trotting back to its accustomed grazing place, the cocks and hens stalked about in their usual desultory manner, one great tree still lay on the ground, but the others were safe, and their murmuring branches seemed rustling with deep fresh life all that night, long after the moon had risen and stirred the shadows on the plain.

Co-operative Stores.

IN the July number of this Magazine the "Story of the Civil Service Supply Association" was told in a very interesting way by one of the original members. The writer described it as an enterprise which "is fast revolutionising the retail trade not only of London but of the whole country," and he justly inferred from this that the story of its fortunes would be worth the telling. We may go further, and say that it is worth while to try and forecast the destiny of the undertakings of which this is the type. It is natural that a member who has sat by the cradle, or rather the cupboard, of the Association, and has watched its progress from 1865, when its sales amounted to 5,000*l.*, to the present year, when they promise to amount to nearly 800,000*l.*, should be sanguine as to its future. We propose to inquire how far this wonderful success is attributable to permanent causes.

It is indisputable that within the last few years Co-operative Stores have become a distinct element in London life. The evidences of this fact are apparent in the carriages which line the Haymarket and Long Acre, in the frequency with which the subject comes up in conversation, in the undisguised uneasiness of the retail traders. To deal at a Co-operative Store has almost become fashionable. This does not mean, of course, that Co-operative Stores are certain to hold their ground. They may be very popular and yet very ephemeral. The novelty of buying cheaply may have attractions for many who hitherto have never asked the cost of a purchase; the visit to a store may give a point to the drive which the visit to the linendraper's has ceased to give. But the charm of making out your own bills and carrying home your own parcels will not last for ever. By-and-by some newer fancy will take the place of the Co-operative Store, and the now deserted shop will be found as indispensable as formerly. This, at all events, is the reflection with which a large number of shopkeepers are trying to comfort themselves, and, no doubt, in every movement of this kind there is much that may be set down to mere imitation or mere love of novelty. But the causes which have made Co-operative Stores popular lie deeper than the momentary desire to do what other people are doing or what you yourself have not done before. These stores have met a real want—a want which was not felt, at least, to anything like the same extent, a generation ago. The reader may at first be inclined to dispute this. After all, he may say, the want that drives buyers to Co-operative Stores, call it by what name you will, is the want to get more goods for the same money, or to give less money for the

same goods. There is nothing new in this. It is as old as a circulating medium; it existed in principle when men had not got beyond barter. But though the want may have been felt at all times, the circumstances of contemporary society are exceptionally favourable to its being felt keenly. During the last thirty years there has been a remarkable rise in the standard of living. It may not be more costly to live well in 1873 than it was in 1843, but a far greater number of persons wish to live well. Several causes have contributed to bring this about. There has been not only a great increase of wealth but a great diffusion of wealth. The discovery of new ways of making money has made many rich as well as a few richer. This change has coincided with a growing tendency to disregard social distinctions not founded on wealth. The time when birth was a necessary passport to good society has passed away. If money alone will not admit a man, it entitles him to a rule to show cause why he should not be admitted. Thus there are three influences working in the direction of increased expenditure, the desire of those whom money has raised to a new level to make the most of it, the disinclination of those originally on that level to be outdone by the new comers, and the irritation of those still on the level which the latter have left to be outdone by men who are better off but not better than themselves. Unfortunately, society does not get wiser as it gets richer. The material gains of civilization may be multiplied and diffused almost without limit, but the intellectual gains are less accommodating. The combination of plain living and high thinking is admirable if you can secure the high thinking, but when the high thinking is absent plain living loses its charm except to men who make economy or digestion their first care. A dull man is harder to amuse than a clever man, and in this as in most other things difficulty means expense. These conditions of society create a constantly increasing number of persons who have the same standard of living and that standard an exceedingly costly one. Again, many luxuries, or what would once have been esteemed luxuries, have been greatly cheapened. This may hardly seem a reason why living should be dearer, but a moment's thought will show that in the long run it is so. Many persons, for example, now drink wine every day whose fathers habitually drank beer. If wine had not become cheaper they could never have done this; but, though they have so far profited by the reduction of price, the wine-merchant's bill is a larger item in their accounts than the brewer's bill was in their fathers' accounts. Travelling is another case in point. Railways and excursion tickets have made it cheaper, but at the same time it has become almost a necessity to many who in the last generation would have stayed at home. Mr. Cook has a fair claim to be classed among the agencies which have made living more costly.

This general rise in the standard of living has not been attended by any corresponding increase in the means of living. Many incomes have not advanced at all; many more have not advanced in proportion to the expenditure of those who earn them. Of course where the diffusion of wealth has been so great there must be many men who make far more

money than men in similar positions made formerly. But the great bulk of the bureaucratic and professional classes—the men in receipt of fixed incomes, the men whose rate of pay is determined by a custom which it takes a long time to change, make about the same number of hundreds per annum and find that a great deal more has to be paid for out of them. Nor is this all. Not only has more to be paid for, but more has to be paid. For some years past the general tendency of prices has been upward. This fact is sometimes denied, and telling contrasts are drawn between the present time, with its cheap groceries and cheap clothing, and the time when the commonest tea was eight shillings a pound and silk or linen a corresponding price per yard. For the purpose for which they are ordinarily used these comparisons are quite misleading. It is very possible that prices have not yet reached and may never reach the level at which they stood half a century ago. But if the figures of last year are set side by side with the figures of the years which followed the introduction of free trade a very great difference will be seen. There are few things that are as cheap as they were in 1850; there are many things that are very much dearer. As regards wholesale prices, the causes that determine them lie out of reach. We cannot put the gold of California or Australia back into its native rock, or make labourers contented with lower wages or less disposed to spend their earnings in ways which bring them into rivalry as purchasers with the classes above them. Retail prices, however, are not fixed with anything like the same uniformity; indeed they seem to invite investigation and possibly reduction by the fact that they are different in different places. The retail price of goods is made up of two elements, the cost of production—which may for present purposes be taken as represented by the wholesale price, and to be by hypothesis unalterable—and the cost of distribution. The difference between the price of coal when you buy it at the pit's mouth and carry it away in your own carts and when it is shot into your cellar by the servants of a London coal-merchant, or between the price of a piece of silk in the manufacturer's sale room at Lyons and on the counter of a linen-draper in Regent Street, resolves itself into the cost of bringing it within easy reach of the retail buyer—of enabling him, that is, to make his purchases in convenient quantities, in convenient places, and at convenient times, and further of enabling him to pay for them on convenient terms. Of these four advantages the first is chiefly valuable to the poor. It is only buyers who have very little to spend at a time and no place in which to store their purchases that care to get tea by the ounce or butter by the quarter of a pound. But to have what you want where you want it, and when you want it, are advantages which come home to everybody. The butcher or the greengrocer who calls for orders just when the mistress of the house has finished breakfast and reappears with his tray or his basket in time for the contents to be cooked for luncheon, represents to many persons the ultimate result of advanced civilisation. Still more convenient is the absence of that constant and irritating check on expenditure which

the necessity of immediate payment constitutes. To be able to put off payment for some considerable time, and then to pay only part of the bill, leaving the balance, swelled by some unnoticed items in the way of interest, to form a sort of nest-egg for future liabilities, has a very intelligible charm for those to whom ready money is usually scarce and always appropriated to the last penny.

This is the state of things that has given birth to Co-operative Stores. The cost of distribution is really an additional payment made for certain conveniences in the shape of trouble saved, and Co-operative Stores afford an opportunity of making retrenchments as regards these conveniences. Instead of orders being called for, they are left in person or sent by post. Instead of goods being delivered by the seller, they are taken away by, or at the cost of, the buyer. Instead of the shop being in the immediate neighbourhood it is in the majority of cases a considerable distance off. Instead of payment standing over for six or twelve months it is required at the moment of buying. If all these real or imaginary advantages are surrendered, the bulk of the cost of distribution can be saved. A small percentage on the wholesale price will pay the rent of a house in which the goods may be kept and the salaries of the shopmen who shew them and pack them up. One large store will do as much business, perhaps, as fifty shops, while the rent paid may not be more than is paid by five out of the fifty. All the labour of men and animals which goes to collecting and booking orders, to keeping accounts with every separate customer, and to delivering the goods bought, is spared to the Co-operative Store. The cost of distribution being thus reduced to the lowest possible limit, the retrenchment effected by dealing at a Co-operative Store is, in the case of persons who have been accustomed to deal at fashionable shops, a very considerable retrenchment. Of course, like all saving, it implies a correlative sacrifice. If there is less money spent there is more trouble taken. If you are indolent, or extravagant, or incapable, or busy, this additional trouble will be a very serious drawback to dealing at a Co-operative Store. But persons belonging to the three first of these categories are not likely to deal at Co-operative Stores, while busy men are usually married, but not to equally busy wives. Women who have been fretting at their own inability to contribute to the family income, may find in the Co-operative Store the means, at least, of preventing the family income from being spent so quickly as heretofore. Their education, perhaps, has not fitted them to earn money, or their husbands do not wish them to make the trial, and the Co-operative Store gives them an opportunity of doing what is equivalent to earning money. By taking part of the labour of distribution on themselves they can lessen the cost of distribution. They can carry their own orders, make out their own invoices, and in some cases carry home their own purchases.

To do all this for themselves involves no doubt a certain sacrifice. But it is a sacrifice which has its compensations. If some conveniences are lost by dealing at a Co-operative Store, there is a corresponding absence

of some of the inconveniences which attend dealing at ordinary retail shops. In the first place, there is no risk of overcharge. In dealing at shops it is often hard to say whether you are overcharged or not. The circumstances which determine the cost of distribution vary, so that the buyer may have no means of ascertaining whether the price asked more than represents the additional value given in the shape of additional convenience. For example, the difference of rent between a shop in an unfashionable or unfrequented situation, and a shop in a fashionable or busy situation, is an element which may fairly influence the price of the goods sold in them; but who is to calculate whether a shopkeeper asks more than is required to ensure him against loss from this cause? Or, supposing that he does not ask more, how is the buyer to make sure that the additional expense incurred by the better situation is not met by a deterioration in the quality of the goods sold? On the whole, we should be inclined to say that the security which Co-operative Stores give on this head is their best title to popularity. Adulteration is so easy and so common, and the dislike to pay more than your neighbours are paying is so general and so natural, that the temptation to a shopkeeper to reimburse himself for money spent in extra rent or other similar ways by selling inferior goods at the usual price, rather than by selling the same goods at a higher price, is very great indeed. No law can prevent this being done, because adulteration need not be effected by the addition of foreign matter. The dealer's purpose will be equally attained if he sells goods of a lower quality at the price of goods of a higher quality. The law may be able to ensure that tea shall always consist of the plant which it professes to be, but it can never ensure that genuine teas worth 2s. a pound shall not be sold for 3s. In the Co-operative Stores, where the buyers and the sellers are really the same persons, this temptation can have no place. Thirdly, the Co-operative Store ensures entire freedom from touting. The system of local shops is a system of constant persuasion to buy, addressed not to the buyer, but to the buyer's servants. The orders are usually given through the cook, and the cook feels that her own importance and that of the family in the eyes of the grocer's or the cheesemonger's young man are measured by the frequency and the amount of the orders of which she is the channel. Under these circumstances, she is naturally disposed to exaggerate the need for giving orders, and as orders depend upon consumption, she is impelled to fix the rate of consumption at as high a rate as she can fix it without seriously risking her mistress's favour. Where there is no calling for orders an honest cook has no inducement to be extravagant; indeed, she gains in point of reputation by being economical. But under the action of the calling system she feels embarrassed every time that there are no orders to give. In fact, she is daily in the position of a man who wants to get out of a shop without buying; and anyone who considers how uncomfortable that position is, and how often he has escaped from it by buying something he did not want, will

not wonder at a similar weakness on the part of his cook. Besides the positive increase of outlay which calling for orders often causes, the honesty of servants is put to serious peril by it. The passage from ordering more than is wanted to ordering things that are not wanted at all, or wanted by the servants and not by their employers, is exceedingly easy, and in many cases this transition is greatly helped by the practice of feeing servants adopted by many tradesmen. By the time that a cook has learnt to waste her money in buying unnecessary goods because she receives a commission of some sort on the purchases effected, she is not far off from direct theft. And even when matters do not go to this length, the system of calling for orders involves a considerable loss of independence on the part of the mistress. She is not free to change her shops at her pleasure, for the cook sets her face against a practice which would bring the visits of the accustomed young man to an end; and it is so convenient to be on good terms with your cook, especially if she is a really valuable servant, that the mistress does not care to subject her to this annoyance, and the consequence is that much of the benefit which is supposed to arise from competition is practically lost. Taking all these considerations into account,—the saving of money, the sense of useful occupation, the absence of certain annoyances, it is not difficult to account for the affection that many women feel for the Co-operative Store.

That Co-operative Stores have done an immense service to retail buyers is undoubted. When the sales effected by one of these Associations amounts to nearly 800,000*l.* in the year, and the prices at which the goods are sold are only six or seven per cent. above the wholesale price, it is probably safe to say that more than 100,000*l.* have been saved to the members. This, though the largest, is not the only Association of the kind, nor is the advantage only confined to those who themselves deal at the store. The price lists of the several Associations serve as a standard, not exactly of wholesale prices, but of retail prices calculated at a certain fixed percentage on the wholesale prices. Before these societies were in being there was no contending with a shopkeeper who maintained that he made only a bare living profit out of his goods. It was in vain to quote the price at which a brother shopkeeper offered the same articles, for such an argument was at once settled by an expression of polite disbelief that they were the same. But except in some few cases the goodness of the articles sold at Co-operative Stores is beyond suspicion. No one has any interest in adulterating them. Additional profits have no temptation for the seller, when instead of going into his own pocket they are distributed amongst the buyers in the form of lower prices. Besides furnishing a standard of retail prices, and so giving the customer a check upon the extortion to which he might be subjected by a combination among dealers or by a mere accidental absence of competition, the Co-operative Stores have really lowered prices outside their own limits. Shopkeepers and customers have alike come to see the advantages of ready money dealings, and it is now a common thing to find

shopkeepers who will undertake to provide goods at the same or nearly the same prices as those charged for them at the Co-operative Stores. Some caution, however, is necessary in dealing with shops that make this offer. Speaking generally, shops cannot afford to sell as cheaply as the Co-operative Association, while giving, as they do in all cases, a good deal more for the money. The purchaser who goes to one of these shops has, in the first place, no annual ticket to take out, and the ticket benefits the seller both by the actual money received and by the inducement it affords to go on using a power of purchasing which it has been thought worth while to buy. In the next place he gets his purchase sent home at the shopkeeper's expense, and the cost of keeping carts, horses, and messengers is so much more deducted from the profits of the shopkeepers. In the third place the shopkeeper has to make a living out of the concern, whereas the Association have for the most part only to pay working expenses. These considerations should make people very cautious in dealing with shops which make these large professions. If the Associations saving money in all these ways—in the time of payment, in the cost of delivery, and in the cost of service, and making money from the sale of tickets, are obliged to charge a shilling for an article, it stands to reason that a shopkeeper who saves money in only one way—the time of payment, and makes nothing by the sale of tickets, cannot afford to sell a similar article at the same price. The impossibility is so obvious that it would not be worth insisting on it if it were not that it is becoming common for shopkeepers to undertake to supply customers who pay ready money at the same prices as the Co-operative Associations. Before being tempted by their offers, those to whom it is addressed will do well to ask the dealer who makes it, how it is that he can pay more servants, and make a fair profit for himself, if he only charges the same prices as a dealer who does not deliver the goods he sells, and does not want to make a living by the sale of them. Business can be carried on in this way on one condition only, and that is that the shopkeeper is doing a large trade on the credit system, and finds that he can supply a certain number of additional customers without additional outlay. So long as this combination lasts it may be worth his while to attract these additional customers, if only to prevent them from going to a Co-operative Store. But as regards shops which have to create their custom for themselves, it is impossible that the shopkeeper, with greater expenses and probably fewer customers, should undersell the Co-operative Stores; and to sell at the same price, while giving conveniences which the Co-operative Stores do not give, is really to undersell them. The value of the additional outlay that has to be incurred and of the additional percentage that has to be earned must be made up somehow, and the most obvious way of accomplishing this is to adulterate the goods sold. In this way the buyer pays the cost of carriage just as much as when he deals at a Co-operative Store, only he does not pay it *eo nomine*. Instead of getting the same goods for the same money, he gets inferior goods for the same money.

What then is to be the fate of retail trading in London? Is it by

degrees to pass entirely into the hands of Associations in which the purchaser is also the dealer, and shopkeepers be in time done away with, or retained only as luxuries used only by rich men? Or will they continue to hold their own, even in competition with Co-operative Stores? There are several reasons which point to the latter of the two solutions here suggested as the one that will be found nearest the truth. In the first place, it is hardly possible that Co-operative Stores should go on enlarging their operations without a disproportionate increase of their working expenses. The author of the "Story" says that the Civil Service Association directly employs about 400 people, and pays upwards of 48,000*l.* a year in salaries and wages, besides paying very large sums for the purchase or rent of the buildings in which the business is carried on. But he tells us further that the pay of the Committee of Management "for duties involving much sacrifice of well-earned leisure, considerable labour, and a great responsibility" is only 80*l.* or 90*l.* for each member; and he justly adds that though the Association has hitherto been mainly served by men whose chief motives were pride in its success, and a desire to benefit their fellow-officers, a time must come when the chief inducements to serve will be the desire to add to income, and that, viewed in this light, the present rate of payment is much too low to attract thoroughly qualified men to the Committee. When the Co-operative Stores have to go into the open market to buy competent officers, and have to pay largely in order to attract them into their employ one conspicuous distinction between their balance sheets and the balance sheets of retail traders will disappear. In the second place it has not yet been ascertained whether, in transactions requiring constant watchfulness and vigour, the services of paid managers, however able, will be as effective as the services of men whose fortunes directly depend on their business success. Of course this argument is equally applicable to all joint stock operations; but the cases in which these operations have hitherto been prosperous have mostly been those in which there was no room for the competition of private traders, as in the management of railroads, or in which there are special advantages attaching to the particular application of the joint-stock principle, as in banking. Co-operative Associations have, up to this time, been managed by zealous amateurs; but it does not follow, because amateur committees have been able to hold their own against individual traders, in virtue of the keen personal interest given by the sense of being in some sort the pioneers and founders of a new movement, that paid managers will hold an equally advantageous position. In these two ways, therefore, Co-operative Stores will be likely to give less satisfaction to their purchasers in proportion as they take their place as one of the established forms of retail trade. The percentage charged on the goods sold will be larger, and the activity of the management will tend to grow less. And even if by care and ingenuity Co-operative Associations should succeed in securing themselves against these seemingly inevitable drawbacks, there are others to which they must be exposed by the very characteristic to which they owe their success. Many of those who now deal at a Store look back with

regret to a time when shopping was not the burden it has since become. After all, there is something like a return to barbarism in a system which ignores the gains derived from combination, and leaves so much of the distribution to be done by each purchaser for himself. Indeed, as regards the delivery of goods, recourse is usually had to combination in another and less convenient form. Instead of each shopkeeper sending home the goods which he has sold, they are entrusted to some parcels' delivery company, a process often involving delay, and always saddling the buyer with a charge which acts as a prohibitive duty on small purchases. Considerable annoyance is entailed by being thus forced to include every imaginable want in the periodical order, under penalty, in the event of anything being forgotten, of having either to go without it altogether or to pay nearly as much for its carriage as for that of the whole parcel of which it ought to have formed part. There seems no reason why, supposing shops not to be recklessly multiplied, each shop should not be able to send home the goods bought at it at as cheap a rate as a separate delivery company. In this case it will be as easy to distribute the cost over all purchasers in the shape of a percentage on each article sold as to defray it by an *ad valorem* charge determined by weight or size. The same argument will apply in its degree to most of the services which the Co-operative Stores either refuse to render or render only for a separate charge. If there are many persons to whom it is an object to save money by doing things for themselves instead of paying others to do them there will be many more who will find their time of too much value to be thus employed or who can afford to spare themselves the trouble of thus employing it.

In the long run, therefore, it seems probable that retail traders may recover a great part of the position they have undoubtedly lost, or, at all events, ensure themselves against sustaining further loss in the same direction, provided only that they will lay to heart the lessons which the success of Co-operative Stores undoubtedly ought to convey to them. It has been seen that the popularity of the Stores is really due to three things—superior cheapness, absence of pressure, and purity of goods. There is no reason why these advantages should not be given to their customers by retail shopkeepers if they have the wits to see their own interest. The superior cheapness of the Stores is the result partly of their ready money dealings and partly of their not doing as much for their customers as is ordinarily done in shops. So far as it springs from the former cause, it is completely within the reach of every retail trader. He can ensure himself against bad debts, he can save expense in keeping accounts, he can have the immediate use of his money, with all the benefits which this gives him in his character of buyer, by the simple expedient of not giving credit. So far as the cheapness of the Stores comes from their leaving purchasers to do a great deal for themselves, it is either within the reach of every retail trader, or it does not really minister to the popularity of the Stores. For example, the suppression of useless services, or of services of which the cost is out of all proportion to the value given, need not be confined to Co-operative Stores. Under the former head would come

excessive calling for orders; under the latter enormous rents paid in order to put the shop within a stone's throw of those who habitually deal at it. Co-operative Stores have accustomed people to send their orders by post, and the result of this change of habit is seen in the increasing practice of dealing with large shops at a distance rather than with smaller shops close at hand. There is no reason why these large shops should not make ordering by post still easier by supplying their customers with printed order lists, such as are usually sent by seedsmen with their catalogues. The amount of each article ordered might then be entered against its name, and the same list with the price affixed might be returned to the customer as his bill. In this way the expense of sending out canvassers would be spared to the shopkeeper and the annoyance of having his servants canvassed would be spared to the customer. An adequate guarantee of the purity of the goods sold is not to be attained without more trouble and arrangement, but it is quite within the reach of shopkeepers if they are willing to act in concert. Supposing that an association of shopkeepers were formed which pledged its members to give a correct description of every article sold, maintained analysts of its own to test any sample offered for examination by a purchaser, and returned the price for any article which failed to stand this test, there would be an absolute practical certainty that no adulteration was practised, and that if inferior qualities were sold, they were sold under a title which proclaimed them to be what they really were. The analysts provided by the association should of course be men of sufficient professional repute to be above all suspicion of wishing to make things pleasant for their employers, and they should be paid well enough to make it worth their while to give prompt attention to the samples submitted to them. By this means there would be as complete an assurance of purity in the case of goods bought from members of the society, as in the case of goods bought at a Co-operative Store. The same object might be attained in other ways—the really essential thing being that shopkeepers should recognise that, without some external test, it is impossible that customers—at all events new customers—should feel as much confidence in the integrity of a dealer who has an interest in selling inferior goods at high prices, as in the integrity of a Co-operative Association which has no interest of the kind.

The conclusion of the whole matter is shortly this: If retail traders are ordinarily prudent they have no cause to be alarmed by the rivalry of Co-operative Stores. But if they act with the singular folly of which some of their number have lately been guilty they will find themselves very deservedly going to the wall. The way to hold their own against the Stores is not to indulge in nonsensical denunciations of Civil Service trading, but to set to work to supply goods of equal value, to supply them under more convenient conditions, and to make the additional price charged for them the honest representative of the additional advantages given. Those dealers who will take the trouble to put this combination within the reach of their customers will not find themselves the worse for the existence of any number of Co-operative Associations.

Physical Education.

Qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam,
 Multa tulit fecitque puer, *sudavit et alsit* ;
Abstinit Venere et Baccho.—HOR. A. P., 412, &c.

Folle decet pueros ludere, folle senes.—MART. l. xiv., Epigr. 47.

At a time when national safety depended on the superiority of individual muscular exertion, rather than of refined strategics and polemical machinery—when a battle resembled rather a scramble of wild beasts, in which the strongest took the best share of the booty, than an united, organised, and scientific system—institutions tending to a development of the bodily powers began to be recognised among the Greeks as advantageous, if not necessary to their military success. In the poems of Homer we find traces everywhere of that physical prowess which appears to form the exclusive subject of admiration for early civilisation. The panegyric of Achilles, though presenting little attraction to a general of the present day—we refer to the attribute of swift-footed, which so often accompanies the name of that chieftain—was considered an excellent qualification at the time of the siege of Troy. But we are compelled to think that the same poet, when he asserts that racers were sometimes invisible, from their excessive swiftness, is drawing rather from the fertile source of his imagination, than from the presence of an observed fact.

That art which the necessity of war had introduced, was afterwards sustained by the love of pleasure and glory. The gymnasts being accustomed to contend naked—a circumstance which is recalled to the reader by their name—in the sight of the whole of Greece, not content with their simple strength of body, began, in addition, to affect the praise of form. To this fact the excellence of Grecian sculpture may in some measure be attributed. In proportion, however, as the glory and the celebrity of the Olympic games increased, their practical utility declined. Men devoted themselves to the training of a particular set of muscles for particular exercises, no longer regarding a general physical improvement, but aiming at the crown of olive for some feat of partial dexterity or strength. With every succeeding Olympiad, men strove more and more not to enable themselves to endure all wants and all temperatures in their varied campaigns, but to perform idle feats in one situation at

home. Thus this celebrated festival, of which the lyric poet of Thebes, on whose lips the legend says the bees of Hymettus left their honey, has sung with a magnificence of style and boldness of expression befitting its ancient origin, degenerated at last into a mere show, and thus the Greeks, by mistaking the means for the end, defeated the purposes of this early institution of their forefathers.

The history of the Olympic games has a moral, which may still be useful to the gymnasts of a later and more civilised age. It is this: Exercise should be general, not particular, unless for a particular defect. Socrates, in that Republic which nowhere was, nor in all probability will be, said that he would not labour like those who run in the racecourse, that he might make his legs strong, while his shoulders and other parts of his body remained weak, nor only as a pugilist, to make his shoulders strong, not caring for his legs; but so that by exercising all his limbs, all might receive a proportionate increase in agility and strength. The observation may well apply not only to a disproportionate exercise of any part of the body in comparison with the whole, but to a disproportionate exercise of the mind in comparison to the body. Philera of Cos, says an old writer, was very skilful in making hexameters. He was also said to be healthy; but he was so singularly thin, that against damage or injury from a high wind, lest he should be overthrown or carried away by it, he was obliged to fortify his feet by lead. This distressing instance of partial culture may be objected to as apocryphal or a myth; but a walk in the country in the vicinity of either of our university towns, will teach us the same lesson, though in a less startling and incredible manner. Men, in common with most other animals, are furnished with legs; the possession is a fact, but their object is a matter of dispute. To the footman in plush, for instance, they appear to be advertisements whereby he may gain or retain a situation; to the manager of a theatre, on his corps de ballet, likewise as an advertisement whereby he may increase his dramatic revenue; to the surgeon, again, on other people generally, as affording facilities for amputation and increased scientific enjoyment; to the hard-reading university student—by which term we do not intend to represent a class, but an exception—they are means necessary to be employed in taking a “constitutional.” A mathematician, who has been studying cubic equations all day, determines on taking a walk to keep himself in health; he is desirous of finding out the true heliocentric latitude of Venus on the 25th of May, 1818, at 30 minutes, 54 seconds past 9 in the morning; he takes one last lingering look at the work he is studying, and, treasuring up the inclination of her orbit to the ecliptic, puts on his hat, and rushes out of his rooms—perhaps oversetting his scout coming upstairs with his tea-things on his way. He walks for three miles, turns, and walks back three miles—he has seen nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing; but he has thought of Venus, and determined that her latitude must be south descending. He has forgotten, however, that the mind requires change

of scene as well as the body, and that the *corpus sanum*, the object of his temporary ambition, is dependent in no slight degree on the *sana mens*.

It may be asserted that gymnastic excellence, considered by itself, is of little use; that the occasions are few on which society requires us to leap over a five-barred gate, or to climb a pole, or to hang with our head downwards. Though this be true, it is apparent to everyone, that health is generally found in conjunction with strength (we except the so-called strength of constitution, a phenomenon of which when found, as it frequently is, in persons of the least perfect health, we can here offer no explanation), and that strength is without doubt increased by muscular exertion. The connection between life and health is too patent to be insisted on. For some other purpose, then, is the leaping-pole necessary than that of avoiding the necessity and delay of clambering over or unlocking gates; it is necessary—we speak generally—for our strength, the prolongation of our health, our existence. Life and health walk hand in hand; health is nothing but integrity of life; disease is nothing but an offence and abbreviation of it. Gymnastic exercise will not under all circumstances be successful, but, *ceteris paribus*, it will be in creating fine men. By which expression is not to be understood plump or fat men, for that fatness is the result rather of ease than of labour may be gathered from a visit to the cattle show. Theagenes, the Thasian, is reported by Athenæus to have eaten a whole ox in two days, a praise which is also attributed to Milo of Crotona. These men were both protagonists in the gymnasium; but we have no authority for supposing, as we might suppose, considering the amount of their food, that they were unusually distinguished for *embonpoint*.

We have said before that exercise should be general. A game at ball, known to the Greeks under the name of *sphæromachy*, a game in which Nausicaa with her companions was engaged when disturbed by Ulysses at the riverside, the *pila trigonalis* of Rome, seems to be admirably calculated for exercising almost the whole order of muscles in the human frame. It would hardly, perhaps, at the present day be considered worthy of a place amongst gymnastic exercises; but that it is an exercise of the greatest advantage there can be little doubt, and more dignity may be imparted to it by mentioning it under other names, as football or cricket, which, says Johnson, is a sport in which the contenders drive a ball with sticks in opposition to each other. This definition would, in fact, apply equally well or better to hockey; but, on reflection, we may perhaps discover, without the aid of the lexicographer, that cricket, our national pastime, of which we are so justly proud, is essentially and primarily a game at ball. Military ardour, combined with a love of their country, has formed our youths into various Rifle Companies, in which the exercises prescribed are advantageous for the same reason, viz., general muscular development, though perhaps to a lesser extent.

The sole difference which formerly distinguished medicinal from

athletic gymnastics, was the adjustive superintendence which prevailed in the former, accommodating the exercises to the particular pupil, while the latter had only in its view the production of the greatest amount of bodily strength or agility, entirely disregarding particular relations. The distinction is to some extent displayed in the different methods of education adopted respectively by our private and public schools. Medicinal gymnastics varied its prescriptions of the quantity or quality of exercise to be taken, according to the difference of sexes, temperaments, age, climate, and seasons. It included dietetics; a portion of medicine before unknown, but now, as we are aware, of high repute. Medicinal gymnastics soon fell into minutiae as numerous as they were absurd. Under its régime were included directions as to walking in the sun or the shade, the proper time of walking, and when we ought to walk slowly, and when it was so necessary to walk quickly, or to run. Games were also devised for the preservation of the health by the exercise of the fingers. To such extreme minuteness was this art carried, which began by simple and wholesome regulations, but degenerated by refinement into the production of luxury, effeminacy, and sloth. Medicinal gymnastics are now no more; but their spirit, in its early simplicity, still exists in every well regulated gymnasium. The lines taken from the Roman satirist, with which we have introduced this essay, may be thought to refer simply to medicinal gymnastics as a dietetic caution; but they are equally applicable to, and may with advantage be considered by, the athletic gymnasts of the present time.

"It was," says Cicero, "somewhat more glorious in Greece to have been the conqueror in the Olympic games, than at Rome to have obtained the honours of a triumph"—the crowns, palms, acclamations, and festivities which in the days of old bestowed so much glory on the successful athlete, were afterwards considered too transitory, unless they were succeeded by others more enduring, and secured to him for the term of his natural life. Such honours were those accorded to him under the protection of the laws, one of the greatest of these being the privilege of taking a front seat at the public games. Such front seat was well given to those whom the Greeks at least regarded as demigods—

— palmaque nobilis
Terrarum dominos evehit ad Deos.

Another privilege of the conquerors, in which the useful was joined to the honourable, was that of being maintained for the rest of their days at the expense of their country, a privilege which was at last found to interfere too much with the civil list of the Emperor. The exemption from every tax or civil burden was not one of the least of the advantages they enjoyed; but it was necessary, in order to obtain it, to have been crowned at least three times at the games.

The desire to immortalize the victorious competitors put in action several organs which are supposed popularly to conduce to that result, such as poetical writings, statues, inscriptions, and commemorations in

the public archives. At the termination of the festival one of the first cares of the agonothete or president was to inscribe in the public register the name and country of the conqueror, and the nature of the combat in which he was victorious. Their praises became among the Greeks one of the principal subjects of lyric poesy ; it is on this subject, as we have mentioned, that all the odes of Pindar are written, divided into four books, each of which bears the name of the games where the athletes whose victories are celebrated in these undying poems had signalized themselves.

Though the conqueror of the present day enjoys few of these advantages, though his name is no longer entered on the public records, and he is bound to pay his taxes as any other victorious member of society, though the art of Phidias and Praxiteles is no more employed in transmitting to ages to come the symmetry of his figure or the beauty of his expression, he will yet feel the advantages of physical training in a longer life than he would, humanly speaking, otherwise have enjoyed, and will be able to show rewards, awaking and preserving in the bosom of his friends esteem and admiration both of the giver and the receiver.

But our competitor enjoys a few negative advantages which it would be unfair to omit. He is no longer obliged to anoint himself all over with the composition of wax and fat known as ceroma, nor does the punishment of the *cæstus* ever render him a stranger to his dearest friends, his physiognomy darkened and confused, "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans nose, sans everything," but glorious withal in an olive crown.

The *pancratium* exists no longer, in which he might be attacked in every method which nature or a cultivated imagination, subject to the proviso that no artificial weapons were to be used, could suggest to his antagonist, a game which was afterwards restricted by conditions, that of not pulling out more than one eye, introduced by Sostratus, being considered the most humane on record. Entertainments of this kind have fortunately given way to the progress of improved feeling, but others with these have been banished without so reasonable a cause for their exile. The *pila* or ball is too generally and without cause despised ; throwing the javelin is entirely discontinued ; pitching the quoit is confined to agricultural persons after their day's toil ; wrestling, long a favourite athletic exercise in England, for the discontinuance of which in the gymnasia we see no reason other than the mutability of fashion, now belongs almost exclusively to the impetuous and unscientific school-boy, in whose vernacular this invigorating exercise is more generally described as a bear fight, and we believe is generally falling into contempt ; the tournament, evidently derived from the *Ludus Trojæ*, is the subject of antiquarian research ; the chariot race is in the same state of practical disuse, revived only occasionally and unmethodically on the Derby Day or the Spring Meeting.

Some degree of gymnastic training seems universal. Captain Cook, in the second volume of the account of his voyage to the Pacific Ocean

and the Sandwich Islands, relates that the natives play at bowls with pieces of whetstone, in shape resembling a small cheese. "They also use, in the manner that we throw quoits, small flat rounded pieces of the writing slate, of the diameter of the bowls, but scarcely a quarter of an inch thick, extremely well polished." We have seen a description of a Cingalese play, which perhaps, from the rude nature of the performance, could hardly be ranked among the productions of the dramatic art. This entertainment commenced with the feats of tumblers, whose naked bodies were ornamented all over with white crosses. These men walked on their hands and threw themselves round over head and heels, and boys formed themselves into a wheel, in all respects resembling the performances of the acrobats of the present day in England; but the principal feature of the play was a wrestling match which, says the reporter, "conveyed sensations by no means agreeable, as it produced the idea of occasioning uneasiness to the principal performers." Some of the later historians of Rome speak with consternation of the manner in which the Germans, by the aid of their frames, which appear to have been simply leaping poles, bounded over the pikes of the foremost ranks or sprang upon the hostile battlements; and Tacitus alludes to certain games, in which the German youth, naked and unarmed, danced amidst pointed spears and drawn swords, displaying wonderful quickness of eye, elasticity of limb, and fearlessness of temperament. During the Middle Ages the peculiar mode of warfare introduced by the northern nations rendered it of the utmost importance that the knights and men-at-arms should be subjected to a system of severe physical training. Hence they were taught to sustain during the heat of the day a heavy load of armour, to carry large burdens, to run for a length of time, to climb tall ladders by the aid of their arms alone, to swim, to ride the great horse, and to run with a spear against a target so arranged that he who missed or struck foul received in return a blow from a pole or bag of sand attached to it.

The Roman *Thermæ* were originally derived from the Greek *gymnasia*, their original name being *Palæstræ*. The term *Thermæ* was taken from the frequent use of hot baths, which seemed to the Romans a necessary ingredient in any athletic exercise. Their original character was very soon lost; they became at last fashionable localities in which to spend the morning, not unlike our Assembly Rooms at Bath and Cheltenham. The generality of the Roman public went there simply to bathe, a few for medicinal purposes, and the rest to listen to various philosophers and rhetoricians who were accustomed to take that opportunity of declaiming in public, or to contemplate, lolling on cushions very much at their ease, the feats of hired athletes, instead of taking a part in the exercise themselves, as had been done by their less effeminate ancestors. The remains of the *Thermæ*, which exist at the present day, will give the reader some conception of their former magnificence. Their convenience and adaptability to the purposes for which they were designed is testified by Martial in an epigram, wherein he draws a comparison by no means flattering to

the Roman Emperor.* Should any Roman youth in the time of the Empire wish by chance to enter into any contest or exercise, there were particular masters, or *Pædotribæ*, who gave him instruction in each subject, there were slaves to anoint him, to undress him, to wash him, and attend on him generally, during his exercise, and, lastly, though his attendance was then seldom required, and his appearance is only to be accounted for by a recollection of the sprains and wounds which, in the palmy days of athletic exercise, were of no unfrequent occurrence, there was a medical man or surgeon ready with all the science of his time to operate, if not to cure.

While Rome flourished under the Emperors, the *Thermæ* attained yearly a higher degree of external and internal excellence—we speak of them simply as places of fashionable accommodation and resort—but with the decline of the Empire, they, in company with institutions of a nobler character, deteriorated and perished. The variety of the exercises which the Romans exhibited, rather than engaged in, is numerous; some idea of it may be formed from the fact that persons, interested in the subject, have gathered together and given us a list of about sixty. Their nature is, for the most part, singularly curious, but generally useful. Walking, for an example, was a recognised and specific exercise, to which, in all cases, the gymnasia were with great care accommodated.

An exercise named *Acrochirismus* is difficult to be understood—it appears to have been a sort of wrestling with the fingers. *Detractio* was a game in which weight was obviously of the greatest advantage, its glory consisted in remaining perfectly firm and unbent whilst another person was endeavouring to haul or bend you in various directions. *Ludus distractorum*, in a Greek dress, *Dieleystinda*, is a game well known to every public schoolboy. Two parties were formed, and a line drawn between them—whichever party first succeeded in dragging the other over this line was esteemed the conqueror.

In the *Manus arcta compressio*, the object was to open the adversary's fingers. *Milo* is said to have excelled in this power of digital compression.

Among the exercises of the voice, which would appear to be sufficiently exercised in our own time by the ordinary intercourse and demands of society—we have crying, laughing, and groaning. This spectacle must have been extremely entertaining. A little farther on we find *Vociferatio*, an exercise in which the qualification of *Stentor* was the object of ambition, and he obtained the crown who could bawl the loudest. In the *Schœnobatica* the accomplishments of *Blondin* were desirable. The exercise is mentioned, it will be remembered, in the prologue of the *Heeyra* of Terence.†

Standing, and holding the breath, were both athletic exercises, accord-

* — Quid Nerone pejus ?

Quid Thermis melius Neronianis ?

MART. l. vii., Epigr. 33, v. 4.

† Terent. Hec. Prol. v. 26.

ing to Galen. These are some of the few exercises in which motion is not required. They are exercises of endurance in the physical, as patience and resignation in the moral code. The Roman athlete practised hunting not in the confined and technical sense of the present day, but generally of animal nature, birds, beasts, and fishes. One of the most extraordinary sports was the *Sciamachia*, or fighting with one's shadow. This was accomplished with hands and feet, and was practised by those of little courage, or of delicate health, to prepare themselves for a more real encounter. The feat will put our reader in mind of the gentleman who, disliking the appearance of the sea, when observed under the awning of a bathing machine, but considering that a proficiency in swimming was a duty which he owed no less to society for the purpose of saving it when accidentally immersed, than to himself, determined on practising on a table, having placed a frog in a glass of water before him to imitate its motions, which animal he had been informed was the best swimming master. Of the existence of the *Sciamachia* there can be little doubt. "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air,"* says the Apostle in his Epistle to the Corinthians, evidently referring to a contest of this nature. *Oscillæ* appears to have been a kind of see-saw—its influence seems to have been rather moral than physical. The Romans celebrated it on the Latin holidays, as a type and in memory of human existence, in which the mutability of fortune—the highest being reduced to the lowest grade, and the lowest raised to the highest—is too apparent to need comment. It is, indeed, an epitome of mortal affairs. Besides, the character of the exercise suggested the cradle of early years, and the tender emotions which accompanied that age of innocence. It is asserted on fair authority,† that the athletes on this occasion were accustomed to drink milk, to increase the magnitude of the illusion.

The *Petaurum*, originally signifying a board or pole fixed to a wall, to which fowls resorted in the evening to pass the night there, came, by some strange derivation of meaning, which we cannot account for otherwise than by the principles adopted in the extraction of pickled cucumbers from King Jeremiah, to signify "a swing." The amusement is frequently referred to both in Juvenal and Martial.‡

Volutatoria was a species of wrestling commenced and continued on the ground: the chief object was to prevent your antagonist remaining uppermost.

Halteres were a kind of masses of metal or stone with which persons leapt holding them in their hands. The weight was adapted to the pupil's strength. Exercise with these instruments, together with the practice of

* 1 Cor. ix. 26.

† J. CALVIN: *Her. Jur. ex Turnebi Advers.* b. 1, c. 20.

‡ *Juv. Sat.* 14, v. 265.

An magis oblectant animum jactata Petauro

Corpora, quique solent rectum descendere funem.

Martial. lli. Epig. 22, v. 3.

throwing stones, are mentioned, we fancy, somewhere by Plato as two employments particularly adapted to the physical education of women.

Since the days of the Roman *Thermæ* our idea of gymnastic exercises, as we shall see from a consideration of the examples we have mentioned, has been greatly limited. Neither the swing nor the see-saw is admitted under the modern category, and the hoop and ball, the favourite athletic games of Imperial Rome, are confined to the nursery or the preparatory establishment. Rope dancing is now banished to the stage, and a commission of lunacy would certainly be issued at the promotion of interested friends and relations against any one who should propose to restore the *Acrochirismus* or the *Sciamachia*. The tendency of the Roman school was to multiply their methods of exercise inconveniently and unnecessarily, that of the present day is rather to circumscribe them within too limited a compass. It has been asserted, for instance, that exercise to confer benefit must be pleasing: that the worker on the treadmill derives no benefit from his labours. It appears to us that this assertion is hasty and incorrect. We have no experience ourselves as to the effect of treadmill exercise, but the brawny arms of the village smith, whose muscles are poetically stated to stand out like iron bands would lead us to a different conclusion. It cannot be said that the blacksmith finds pleasure in beating horse shoes, but his muscular development is certainly improved by the process. Again, the exercise of the trapezium is not strictly pleasurable, but is it, therefore, the least useful of gymnastic exercises? The compulsory use of this instrument, which is, in fact, a *sine quâ non* in gymnastic education, in the pupil's daily programme, must lead us to answer the question in the negative. Mr. Maclaren, an authority under whose able guidance the University of Oxford is steadily improving in physical culture, was, and we hope still continues to be, a great friend to the trapezium, and took it under his especial superintendence. Exercise, whether pleasing or not pleasing, is equally advantageous. The same degree of perspiration, the same muscular action is produced, the same results of sound repose, strength, and health necessarily follow. That exercise should be pleasing to be attractive, is a different proposition; no man would go to the treadmill voluntarily from love of the machine, and very few, it may be, to the trapezium. But attraction in the least pleasing of exercises can always be produced by competition. A steeple-chase has in itself the pleasure of excitement, but even here the pleasure is greatly augmented by competition. But in the case of a flat race of a mile and a half, the runner would surely find the exercise dull, monotonous, and unpleasant to the last degree, unless an extraneous pleasure were induced by competition. The knowledge of this fact, and the social instinct of mankind, has led to the formation of clubs and societies and the establishment of prizes for the successful competitor.

Perhaps not the least advantage which is derived from muscular, active exercise, as opposed to passive exercise—by which we refer to a ride in a carriage, or a sail in a vessel, in which latter case the abdo-

minal muscles are the only ones actively exercised—is cleanliness. We mention this, as it has been little insisted on by the advocates of gymnastic training. It belongs rather, perhaps, to a treatise on medicinal than athletic gymnastics; but the two are at the present day, as we have said, happily incorporated. A microscope will show the millions of drains with which the skin is perforated, for the sake of avoiding effete matter. This effete matter can only be thrown off by perspiration, produced by exercise. If it is not thrown off, it is absorbed into the system, and diseases, particularly consumption, and premature death, are the result. The result is produced by the canals of the skin becoming clogged, which not only prevents the refuse matter from coming out, but also prevents oxygen, which is essential to life, from coming in. We do not breathe with the lungs only, consuming carbon and other matter, and renewing the blood with oxygen as it passes through them. The skin also is a respiratory organ; some animals have no lungs, and breathe entirely with the skin; others with a portion of the skin modified into gills, or rudimentary lungs. In animals of a higher grade, though the lungs are the instruments principally devoted to this function, the skin retains it still to such an extent that to interfere with its pores is highly dangerous; but to arrest their operation, fatal. The breathing of the skin may be easily proved by the simple experiment of placing the hand in a basin of cold water, when it will be soon covered by minute bubbles of carbonic acid. But a more complete and scientific proof is afforded by inserting it in a vessel of oxygen, when the gas will, after a short interval of time, be replaced by carbonic acid. "We all know," says Dr. Brereton, "from daily experience, the intimate sympathy which exists between the skin and lungs, and when we are walking fast, how much more easily we get along after having broken out into a perspiration; if we are riding our horse freshens up under the same condition." In these homely words he is indirectly proving the chief sanitary characteristic of medicinal gymnastics. We have most of us heard of the story of the unfortunate child who, to add solemnity and symbolic happiness to the inauguration of Leo X. as Pope of Rome, was gilded over at Florence, to represent the Golden Age. The career of that child so conditioned, was brilliant, but brief. It of course died in a few hours. One of the reasons of the greater danger of extensive burns or scalds compared with others, smaller though deeper, is the fact that the former exclude a greater surface of skin from the oxygen of the air. Mr. Fourcault, a distinguished French physiologist, whose admiration of science appears to have led him to care little for the infliction of torture on other animals than himself, sacrificed a great number of guinea pigs, rabbits, and cats, by varnishing over the whole of their skin, contemplating with satisfaction the inevitable result—death—as a demonstrative proof that the skin breathes.

One word more. It has been imagined that gymnastic exercise is exclusively profitable to the young. It is not so; it is of advantage, of great advantage likewise to the old. Young persons—we include, of

course, women, and wish that callisthenics, which we suppose to be a species of female gymnastics, were more systematised and popular—need little exhortation to exercise, since, by nature, motion is their chief desire; but they stand in need of advice and moderation, since, as they do everything immoderately,* so they are accustomed to take too much exercise, and of an improper character, a course of proceeding not without danger. On the contrary, with older men, the increasing weight of the body, and the loss of the so-called “animal spirits,” † induces the desire of repose, and they need an increase of exercise beyond that which inclination enjoins on them. Thus they are brought within the province of the gymnastic code. It has been said that Nature is an all-sufficient guide in this respect. This is true of our proper rational nature, but not of mere individual inclination, to which the apophthegm is more frequently applied. Children, who by reason of the tenderness of their age, are incapable of reason, live indeed according to nature, but rather to that of brutes than of men. This element of superiority which we possess over the rest of the animate creation, tells, or was intended to tell, men of advanced years, if they would but listen to it, that exercise is necessary to their increased age, since the natural heat of the body then becomes weaker, and it is less able to purge itself of those superfluities which, by gathering and resting therein cause, at first, considerable inconvenience, at the last, decay and dissolution.

Folle decet pueros ludere, folle senes,

said Martial eighteen hundred years ago, and the advice has been rejected since by desuetude rather than by common sense. Though the exercise mentioned has not the magical effect of beauty—

A withered hermit, fourscore winters worn,
Might shake off fifty, looking in her eye—

some perceptible advantage may yet be obtained by any old man who will be childish enough to play at ball.

* Arist. Eth. : πάντα ἔχον πρόττους.

† An expression of popular interest, which appears to have originated in the philosophy of Leibnitz.

Zelda's Fortune.

CHAPTER VIII.

KING COPHETUA.



IF mankind, and especially woman-kind, only knew how to meddle means to mar, Lady Penrose, by the discretion which is the better part of speech, would have put off the end of Lord Lisburn's drift by perhaps as much as a day. A day does not sound much, but then everything at last happens in a day: the greatest general, social as well as military, is he or she who best understands two

things—the infinite value of exactly twenty-four hours, and how to compel one's adversary to act first and therefore to throw the almost certain risk of blundering upon him.

Zelda lighted her lamp and said nothing—Lord Lisburn tried to help her, and said as little. He felt singularly stupid, not from shyness, but because what he had to say, and what he had made up his mind to say, seemed only attainable by a long process of trying to explain the inexplicable. He could not help feeling a little like a sultan about to throw the handkerchief, and half the excitement of the experiment is lost when the acceptance of the missile is a foregone conclusion. He had managed to convince himself that he was very much in love indeed, so that to make a proposal of marriage without the conventional preliminaries of courtship seemed almost brutal.



"Oh!" she cried, going down on her knees, "and I love you too!"

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Of course, also, like all people under similar circumstances, he had timed his opportunity with infamous want of tact. He had not even consulted his pillow, but had gone straight with the irritation of Lady Penrose and Harold Vaughan still upon him to find Zelda in one of those "moods," which had now become by-words with all who had the misfortune of her acquaintance, and with all who like to talk green-room gossip about the capricious eccentricities of *prime donne*. Perhaps, however, that mattered but little on the present occasion: a *prima donna* seldom carries her eccentric capriciousness so far as to refuse a coronet. Not that Lord Lisburn thought about his coronet—he was only thinking how he should begin, and she did not give him any aid even by so much as saying, "It is a fine evening."

He was not shy, for he had no self-distrust, and knew the outer crust of the earth very well. Not being a social geologist, he was bound to content himself with digging to the shallow limits of his spade: but still stray quarrymen, with chance blows, sometimes light upon stranger phenomena than savants. I do not know that there is any need to make an elaborate apology for Lord Lisburn's sudden plunge into the hitherto unknown mine of a very simple passion. He was young both in age and in character, he was exceptionally impulsive, he was wholly free from the pride of caste or the fear of what people might think or say of him. He was in the nervous stage of convalescence. Slander had forced his generous nature to look upon Zelda as one whom he was bound to shield by wearing her colours openly at his lance-head. All his imagination was fascinated by the atmosphere of mystery and stage prestige which breathed from her. He was provoked by opposition. She was the only woman who had ever displayed active enthusiasm for his adventurous views. Her voice, when she spoke or sang, was of the sort that can create, in an hour, the effect of the sympathetic intimacy of years. She seemed to him different from all other women in every way. If a quarter of such a catalogue was not enough to account for all the phenomena of what is called love at first sight, then a whole army of life-histories must be despatched to the limbo of the unaccountable.

Still it was to some extent necessary that he, like Harold Vaughan, should feel the direct power of her eyes, and he felt it now. Not that they fell upon him with the same lightning power as upon the doctor, but there was a glow left in them that was terribly dangerous to such prepared tinder as he had become. Moreover, now that for the first time he saw her fairly, without her paint and spangles, he was all the more struck by the singular style of beauty which he had hitherto only assumed. Even if she had not been beautiful in any accurate sense, she had the life and light of eyes and lips that can dispense with form and even colour, and even make men rave about positive ugliness, to the amazement of those who, looking in after years upon a dead portrait of some once famous *belle*, are driven into the theory that there is a temporary fashion in beauty as well as in clothes.

The lamp was lighted at last, and its light fixed the picture of Zelda in more harmonious and consistent colours than it had been sketched for him by the London daylight of yesterday. She seemed to belong so essentially to evening that, when the streets were completely shut out, it was as though she had lifted up her own veil only to throw it over all the outside world, so that common-sense might grow blind, and imagination play whatever tricks it chose. She lay down upon a sofa and made a pillow of her arms: he leaned on the mantelpiece and studied the mirror. He must begin somewhere, but how? He felt that, under such circumstances, no ordinary forms of speech would do, and was painfully conscious that conversational novelties were not in his line. "What an idiot she must think me!" was the only speech that occurred to him.

"Do you go to the theatre every night, mademoiselle?" was his very last resource: and he said it like a school-boy of those far-off days when school-boys felt out of their element in the presence of a strange girl.

"Every night but Sunday."

"Of course, I didn't mean Sunday. I wish this was Sunday, though."

"So do I—I should go to bed. But why do you?"

Here was an opening for a compliment—that was something.

"Because—well, because I want to talk to you," he said, letting the chance slip by. But if she was going to the theatre the moments were precious.

"I must go directly, and I must eat something. But——"

"I won't keep you ten minutes. I'm in a hurry, too. But—I couldn't go without saying good-bye."

"What—you're going away? To the cold countries? But you swore——. Ah!" she exclaimed, starting up and putting her hands to her forehead, "my veil!"

"For heaven's sake, don't put on that veil again—pray let me see you before I go—the last time!"

"Ah, but the last time's the worst time—it's once that's the mischief. Where is my veil?" Lord Lisburn took it from the chair, nearer to him than to her, over which it had been flung. She ran to take it, but he held it up beyond the reach of her hands.

"Give it me," she asked imploringly, but not without a tone of command. "Give it me, or I will have a sore throat—no, you're not Carol—I'll go into the cupboard, so that you shan't even see my chin."

"But——"

"You're like the rest of them, then—I thought, anyway, *you* were kind. Very well——" But he could not be expected to forego his one advantage of being eleven inches taller than she.

"You shall have it," he said. "But you must tell me why. I must know why you insist on hiding yourself from me. Do you hate me so bitterly?"

"Hate you! If I hated you I should wish for a hundred eyes."

"No—one moment more. What would happen if you had a hundred eyes?"

"Oh, don't ask me——"

"Yes; but more depends on your answering me than you know. What would happen if you had a hundred eyes?"

She hung down her face with shame. "You asked if I hate you," she said. "If you knew, you would hate me—and everybody hates me but you."

A great wave of joy ran through him. "You let everybody else see your face—you hide it from no one but me—you fear to do me harm? You foolish girl, what in the world makes you think you have the Evil Eye?"

"You have said it. I have the Evil Eye."

"You have the most glorious eyes on earth, you mean—and you hide them for my sake alone? Then now you shall never have your veil. I will keep it for ever, and to-morrow you shall have a fair exchange."

"Oh, please give it me—are you mad, and you going straight from me to where——"

He looked down at her with a half-loving, half-pitying, wholly protecting smile. "If I am not afraid of your king of the demons, do you think I am afraid of you? Listen to me—I haven't known you long, but I have known you well enough—yesterday—to call you Pauline, haven't I? Well, I've been in all sorts of countries where every tenth man and woman one meets is thought to have the Evil Eye, and so I was obliged to find out the best charm. And the consequence is that I'm as safe as if your eyes were hidden by blue spectacles."

"You have found the charm? What is it—deer's horn—a horse-shoe——"

"Something much more easy to carry. It's the maxim of 'don't care.'"

"Oh!" she said, with a sigh of disappointment. "I don't hold with 'don't care.'"

"Well, then, I'll give you a better charm still—believe nothing that prevents your looking anybody straight in the face, whether you hate them, or whether you—don't hate them." She was still standing so close before him that he could without advancing an inch have clasped her to his heart had he followed impulse—but, for almost the first time in his life, he allowed his impulse to remain unfollowed. He was touched to the very soul with her having, in however absurd a fashion, singled him out as the object of her care and, as it seemed to him, of her devotion; and then, in a moment, whatever element of selfishness there had been in the sudden growth of his passion faded away into genuine enthusiasm for one who could turn even superstitious ignorance into a proof that the only mystery covered by her veil was the mystery of a woman's soul. He did not think any the worse of her for being content to let her evil influence fall at random upon others: that was of course the crucial test of the distinction she drew between him and all the rest of the world, and he would have been a little higher than man if he had quarrelled with her special kindness for the sake of her general cruelty. And then there was the delicate fear lest he should guess the true cause

of her ostrich-like concealment from him—her willingness to hide herself from him for ever rather than become hateful in his eyes.

"But what in Heaven's name gave you such an idea?"

She did not look straight at him, even now. "He whom you yourself call a wise man—Dr. Vaughan."

"He told you so? Impossible."

"As plain as sunshine—that I harm all I come near: that you would never have been stabbed but for me."

"As plain as moonshine, you mean. Vaughan a wise man? He's an ass, and I begin to think him a blackguard. You do harm to all you come near? Just think, Pauline—that stab was the best piece of luck that ever happened to me in all my days. If it hadn't been for that I should now be a thousand miles away."

"I thought you wanted to be away. Aren't you going now?"

"And then I should never have known the best and dearest girl in all the world. By Jove, if ever I meet Aaron again, I'll thank him—I'll make his fortune. As for going away—Pauline——" his heart began to beat fast, for a brilliant way of getting to the point was dawning upon him. "May I keep the veil? May I prevent its ever hiding your eyes from mine again?"

"Then you're glad you know me? You're not afraid of me?"

"In one way I'm terribly afraid. Do you know what my question means? It means that I want to see your eyes all my life long—that I'll give up the North Pole, if you lie—that I love you terribly."

"Oh, thank you for loving me—I love you too! So much that I can't tell you how." Her face lighted up with a new and startling pleasure. "It's true then I've done you no harm. Oh, you may keep the veil, and welcome—but what good will it be to you?"

But if her face lighted up with new pleasure, his whole heart blazed up with eager joy. "You do love me then?—Pauline!" and taking both her hands in one of his own, he drew her towards him with his arm. "Then you will look at me now?"

She did look at him, but not in the way he longed for. It was with a start of wonder that she drew back and held him off at arm's length, with both her hands held before her for a shield.

"Not that!" she panted out, as though holding some wild animal at bay.

"Pauline! Not what? May I not even touch you, when I am giving you my whole life to keep you from all harm for ever?"

"I thought you said you loved me?"

"Only thought? I love you with all my heart and soul."

"And is that what you call loving, when I had sooner you stabbed me?"

"Sooner I stabbed you than what? Pauline, don't you love me after all?"

"Of course I do. Haven't you been kind to me—you only—till now?"

"Kind! Is that all you mean?"

"What should I mean else?"

"What I mean is everything—that's all."

"What—you mean like the Count loved Sylvia? You mean you want to be more my master than Aaron, to take my life——"

"How can you insult me so cruelly? Yes, I do want to take all your life into mine—I want to make you my wife—is not that everything? You think I would hurt a hair of your head? I would die for you, and will, if you please. Pauline, you have said you love me—what can I do more than give myself to you?"

Zelda's education had advanced rapidly in the last few hours, but her views upon the subject of love and marriage were still confused. The things she might of course understand, but the words, in their civilised and complex sense, belonged to the stage, as much as those mysterious letters of the alphabet which are used to denote stage-business in a prompter's copy. Her feelings about Harold Vaughan were without a name: the word "love," which she had reserved for Lord Lisburn, meant nothing more than "*j'aime*," which, as everybody knows, is as applicable to her favourite dish of roast fowl as to a man or woman. As to the yet more complex idea of marriage, of course she knew that there were people who bore the relation of husband and wife, but how and why people are married she knew just about as well as she knew how and why they are born and die. She had never seen sisters and friends led up to the altar, had never been the confidante of an engagement, had never heard of a trousseau, had never read a love-story. Zelda's fortune was of this extraordinary nature, not that she was practically a savage in a civilised country—that of course is ultra-common—but that she was a savage in the midst of the most complex forms of civilisation, and what must therefore be regarded as its final limits—the fictions of art, the fictions of social slander, the fictions of the press, the fictions of rank and riches, and all the other inventions which require a special training from the cradle to make us understand them. Does anybody ever consider what an elaborate course of education it takes to know what "love" means, as we have come to use the word—not love as a passion, not love in the sense of liking and affection, but love as a sentiment? A fairly quick girl, indeed, might, without ever hearing the manufactured article assumed as a real product of nature by her relations and friends, gain a sufficient knowledge of its forms and rules by reading two or three novels and one or two songs. But to make up each of the novels and each of the songs have gone the results of a thousand other novels and ten thousand other songs, going back through various phases of fashion to a few common originals created by individual genius out of exceptional cases and materials. Our sentiment comes at millionth hand from the artificial veil under which court poets hid common nature, and though from habit it has become our second nature, it can never be a first natural instinct, let us poeticise on the subject as we will. We have doubtless ennobled love by ignoring passion and condensing and exalting special affection, for

what is Art but the perfection and purification of nature? When Lord Lisburn spoke of love, he, like all of us, had in his mind the concentration upon one person of all devotion, unselfishness and self-sacrifice. When Zelda heard the name of Love, it conveyed to her mind simply the name of Nothing. If she loved, it was without the name—Nature gives no name in her Baptisms.

"What can I do more than give myself to you?" he asked. And Zelda's heart answered, "Surely nothing more." The desire of self-surrender was not new to her. But what meant the desire of self-surrender without the desire for an equal exchange? And what could she possibly do for him? It was not in a moment she could learn that she, apart from her money-making qualities, could be the object of desire for any man's spiritual part. It is true that she longed to have one man out of all the world at her feet—but that one man was not Lord Lisburn, and she was not philosopher enough to be able to draw conclusions from comparisons, and to argue that as she felt towards one so might another feel towards her. He was bewildered by her long silence, and found it as impossible to read her eyes as if he had never robbed her of her veil. He and she could not be farther apart if they had been separated by centuries in time, and in place by half the circumference of the globe.

"What can I do more?" he repeated again. "My poor girl, they talk of hearts being made to bleed—I know what it means now. It tortures me to think of all you must have gone through. Why you can never have had a real friend. I can't bear to think of it—you, that ought to be a Queen. I don't say I would give up life and everything to save you—that would be nothing at all. I can't say what I wouldn't do. Don't think me quite a selfish brute, though, for asking you to give me everything for nothing. I'm able to offer you most things you can want, thank God, and I can love you so well that you can't be unhappy. Surely you didn't think I was asking you to be anything but my wife—to be Countess of Lisburn, if that matters?"

"This is very strange," she said dreamily. "Can you care for me so much that you want to give me everything and have nothing back again? I thought marrying was a thing for rich folk—gentlemen and ladies. Why should anybody want to marry me? What could you do with me when you'd got me?"

Singularity is certainly one of the straightest arrows of passion, where there is the smallest circle of imagination to serve for a target. And of that inflammable stuff the young man who dreamed night and day upon and about the sea had already proved that he had a considerable supply beneath his easy-going and straightforward ways. His life had made him something of a poet, though of the mute and inglorious kind, and as his growing passion was twined round what he believed to be the stem of duty and honour, he saw no reason why he should not allow it freely to spread and climb.

"Strange?" he asked, eagerly. "Who ever heard that love was

strange? It isn't love that's strange where you are. And as for marrying—I am a gentleman, I hope, and you are a lady, I know. And as for what I should do with you——”

Suddenly the dreamy look cleared off, and a bright light came into her eyes. “Ah! I am a lady—really a lady—you own it—you call me so?”

“With all my heart. What else should you be?”

“You don't despise or scorn me—you don't think any the worse of me for being a poor, stupid girl, who doesn't know what to say or what to do——”

“I love you,—that's all; with all my heart and soul.”

“Oh!” she cried out, going down on her knees before him, and kissing his hand as she had done once before, “And I love you too! Yes, you are the only one of them all who sees what I want to be.”

“Pauline! You really mean you love me? You will be my wife? You know what I mean now?”

She knew no more than ever, but that was nothing: all her speculations were swallowed up in one proud impulse, that lighted her up all over, and made her look really beautiful, even for critical and impartial eyes. I am by no means sure that if she had really understood him, and if the two could have married out of hand, that the *mésalliance*, though unpromising, would have turned out a failure. Where she knew nothing and he cared nothing about the world, the moral and mental training of an unspoiled and loving heart would have given him full and congenial employment for his whole life long, even beyond the possibility of discovering the North Pole. They might have gone off in the *Esmeralda*, and have returned hero and heroine, or have died together; and in either case all would have been well—if only the pride wherewith his words had filled her had been for him.

She felt herself grow inches taller.

“Countess of Lisburn!” she thought to herself. She knew no more of the peerage than of the primer, but she had heard much talk of Dukes and Earls in her little circle, and the title came upon her almost with the charm of awe. In any case she knew it meant something very great indeed—even the irreverent Carol, she recalled to mind, had thrown out his random prophecy of her possible fate in such a manner as to imply that he considered it the *ne plus ultra* of the sublime. “Countess of Lisburn! He may look down on Zelda, he may look down on Pauline, but Countesses are not looked down on—he will look up to me then—at last! Yes, that yellow-haired Gorgio girl will not be a Countess of Lisburn. I wonder what a Countess can do? Can she put people in prison, or punish them and make them obey her, like Sylvia? She was a Baroness, and I suppose it's all the same. Any way, nobody can't say I'm not a lady then—and as for Miss Claudia, Benguilango take her. He hates beggars—we shall see which has the best of it then. I want to be like her indeed! When I'm lady enough to be Countess of Lisburn!”

Claudia had left her in such a state of jealous and angry despair,

that the sudden revulsion caused by the unexpected vision of a triumph almost equal to that of the savage heroine whom she represented nightly at the Oberon, braced and nerved the set purpose of her life into yet greater energy. Had she really comprehended Lord Lisburn, his chivalrous devotion, and all the sweet dreams of life-long heart-union and mutual happiness that love, with him, had conferred upon the word marriage, she would have been nothing less than a demon in woman's form to have made use of so honest and true a heart as a mere stepping-stone to the fulfilment of a confused dream.

Whether Lord Lisburn was as much the happiest of men as an accepted lover, who is all at once transformed into the chrysalis condition of an engaged man, ought to be—as Harold Vaughan had once been, for instance—is not easy to say. If excitement means happiness, he was the happiest man in the world. If content and quietude mean happiness, he was very far from the great sunshine of calm that signifies the fulfilment of a soul's inmost desires. He had none of the ordinary troubles that in most cases come as little clouds to interfere with the full brightness of such a sunrise—there were no parents whose consent was doubtful, no lawyers whose delays were certain, no friends and relations to propitiate, no previous flirtations or entanglements to break through. Though there were, of course, many matters connected with the biography of his *fiancée* that it would have been well to know, he would have scorned to ask a question even of her—the first-fruits of his love must be perfect trust, not only in the present and future, but in the past besides. His abstinence from every question bearing upon her identity with the Zelda of Harold Vaughan did not arise from fear of what the answers might be, but from the perfect love that casts out fear. When they were married she would no doubt tell him all things, if not before: and so far was he from hoping that her history would turn out to be common-place after all, that he would even have been a little disappointed at the loss of a single element of romance in the life of her who had become the poetry of his own.

Of course he burned to tell somebody of his good fortune, without exactly being himself the first to publish it to the world at large. It is curious how fond world-despisers are of keeping their social sins to themselves, and though Lord Lisburn's contempt for Lady Penrose and all her kind was thoroughly sincere, and though he would have professed infinite amusement at the look of her face when she heard the news, still he felt very much as though his contempt and his amusement belonged much more to the armoury of self-defence than of aggression. Nor was Harold Vaughan any longer in the position of a sympathetic friend in matters of love, however congenial he might be in such less genial climates as the Arctic Zone. So, however much he burned to talk over the symptoms of his madness with somebody who could understand and appreciate them better than his future bride herself, he was compelled to be himself his own *confidant*.

Nor was his good-night to Zelda altogether without its sting. She need not have turned her lips away from his, considering how respectfully they sought hers, or have withdrawn her hand from his so quickly, considering how tender was his pressure. His satisfaction with her coldness towards all the rest of the world was not meant to extend into content with her coldness to him. However, he had to put up with this half embrace as best he might, and to hope for a thaw in time. She had told him that he was loved—was not that more than enough for now? So it was, on the whole, less with a light than with an exalted heart that, at last, he went off with his luggage from Golden Square, with a promise to see her again the next morning in order to arrange innumerable things—her release from her engagement at the Oberon, the how and when of their marriage, and whether the honeymoon was to be spent on board the *Esmeralda*.

Zelda heaved a profound sigh of relief as soon as he had closed the door. He looked up to her lighted window from his cab, but was not gratified by her looking out to see the last of him as he drove away. She was walking up and down in a state of wild eagerness for impossible things to happen in an impossible instant of time. If he was shy of proclaiming his happiness, she would have proclaimed her coming dignity to the house-tops that it might the sooner reach the ears of him for whose sake she had promised herself to another. She was impatient for everything—impatient even to look again upon her rival. She was at the very height of her exaltation when Carol, in evening dress, and with his hat almost falling from his head with haste, broke her commands by breaking, without even a warning tap, into the room.

"What's the matter," he cried out. "Not dressed, and Abner making believe his overture was encored, to give you time to come. You're not ill? By Jove, if you've got another sprained ankle this time, people will be asking for their money back—and such a house—royalty, too. Come, jump into my cab——"

"What—you here again? No, I won't jump into your cab, and I won't sing."

"Mademoiselle! you *must*."

"Must, indeed! People have done saying 'must' to me, I can tell you."

"Are you mad? Do you want to lose your engagement—pay forfeit——"

"Tell, them, if you please," she said, drawing herself up as high as nature allowed, "that I am going to be Countess of Lisburn."

Carol's tongue for once lost its rapidity.

"I have made Editors," he said, with a dignity almost equal to her own, "I have made a Bishop, I have made Poets, I have even made Peers. But I don't think I ever made a Countess before. I'll get it talked about the house, and you shall have a double encore in everything. Your future ladyship will remember Denis Carol. I said I'd make you a

Countess, and a Countess you are. I'm not surprised—I knew it all along. Come—they won't be angry with you for being late when they know why. By Jove, you're the cleverest girl that ever was born—you do me credit, indeed you do."

It was her first homage, and fell upon willing ears. She went, for her heart was full of she knew not what, and if she had staid at home she would still have sung. But Lord Lisburn was not particularly pleased when he read in next morning's *Trumpet* how his future wife had received "an ovation that crowned all her previous triumphs," and, in another place, "*on dit*, that Mdle. Pauline Leczinska is about to be led to the altar by a peer of the realm." He knew what sort of people were about her too well to think her guilty of such hideous treason to the very alphabet of sentiment, and he thought he knew her too well to be angry with her for the work of the flies that buzzed about her and treated her fame as though it were carrion. But he threw the *Trumpet* at poor Pedro's head all the same and, though both indignant and mortified, felt all the more eager, not only to make her his wife, but to carry her off in the *Esmeralda* to regions where there are no tongues but those of Esquimaux, where the Sun is the only Journal, and Nature herself the only Stage.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EPISODE.

WHEN the Cornflower, or the Gretchen, of Mrs. Goldrick's vision of memory had in one instant seen the barely tasted cup of her youth fall upon the ground before Herr Maynard's feet and shiver into a thousand pieces, she knew that the broken atoms, do what she might, could never be united into the semblance of a cup any more. But when she caught the stray glance of herself in Marietta's mirror that showed her the fixed and stony expression, as of one grown old in her spring-time, that she must henceforth wear in the eyes of all men, she had also caught something more than a passing glimpse into another mirror—one of those flashes of truth that every now and then do the work of years in forming character by revealing us to ourselves. She not only saw with dismay the ruins of her vanished beauty, but she caught sight of the three forms of Envy, Hatred, and Jealousy, each wearing the very features that Marietta's looking-glass had already told her were her own. In her youth she had always been a viewer of visions, even as in middle age she had developed into a dreamer of dreams. She had fancied that she was worshipping the ground trodden by her benefactress, while all the while she was worshipping the heavy feet that followed and trampled out the light foot-prints of Marietta.

And she had been offered a sum of gold to aid the man whom she loved to gain her rival! She knew that the offer was well-advised, for she could not help becoming conscious at last of the glaring fact that she

and her mistress had changed places—that the *protégée* had become the protector, and that she, with her strength of character, formed in the hardest school of poverty, could influence Marietta with a touch or word. The *ballerina* could not get on for an hour without clinging to somebody—yesterday it was Maynard, to-day it was Gretchen—at a sign from Gretchen it would be Maynard again. Well—and suppose she gave the sign? To sell her dream of love for gold did not strike her with the same thought of treason to romance which it would—perhaps—have carried to French novel-heroines who to her represented the ideal and poetic world. In the first place the love was gone, irretrievably. So far as its actual value was concerned it would turn no balance by as much as the weight of a feather's shadow. She judged his love by her own, and he had proved to her—as she thought—that he could love Marietta as she understood love, in spite of scorn and coldness, and all the more for its being despised. On the other hand, as she well knew, gold, even as a source of positive happiness, is the heaviest of all actual things. Those who have ever wanted it know what romance even, what poetic sentiment, belong to the word "Gold"—how, if it were not for shame of being thought sordid, we should class avarice with love itself as a passion of the most supreme order—as the source of as much selfish heroism and of as much heroic self-denial. She had not forgotten how hunger had taught her to compare, not common gold coins to the diviner stars, but the common stars to diviner gold coins: she had not forgotten the agony of soul she had suffered at the loss of a guinea, or how her longing to spend some of it in aiding her friend the Jew had enhanced the poetic flavour of greed which exhaled from her dreams of Gulden under the direct rays of the golden stars. During her short span of happiness she had forgotten all these things: money had become an every-day matter, that came and went without anybody's thinking why or how. But in the agony of her supreme disappointment all her soul, as it were, was summoned together to meet and, if it might be, to resist the blow: not one passion or one memory disobeyed the summons, and the girl, whose whole object in life from her earliest days had been to coin the dust of the streets, the flowers of the field, everything and anything, into pence for her own self, was necessarily the first to return to the front and occupy the ground.

It was then the idea dawned upon her that if she could not heap up for herself treasures of love and sympathy in Paradise, she might get together an earthly treasure of the kind she had tried and known. She of course formed no deliberate plan, but the tendency formed itself, as in all such cases. Nobody ever said "I will sell myself for gold:" such contracts have simply to be signed, without being first read over.

She did not sleep for a moment the first night: she seemed to hear all the bells in Vienna chiming the whole night through. These bells, also, were her old familiar friends, older than Marietta, and their voice was in accordance with the mood in which she threw herself back into her days of wretchedness, to find in them her proper home. For an instant

she felt inclined to obey them, and to escape from her mock paradise in body as well as in soul. But that would now be out of the question. It would be impossible for her to return to the ranks of Trudchen and the other Gretchen, and to the dismal, hungry strife for daily bread, in which she was now less fitted to engage than ever. In more respects than one she was changed.

She dropped asleep after sunrise, and rose late: but she was still earlier than Marietta, who seldom got up before afternoon. She had a glorious dream: It was she whom the Englishman loved after all, and when she woke it seemed that it was the sound of his voice that called her out of sleep. So it was with a doubly cold weight in her for a heart that she began to prepare Marietta's coffee—the *ballerina* was as whimsically particular about her coffee as about everything else, and would not look at it unless it was made by Gretchen's own hands. Gretchen might have put poison into the cup had she pleased: the thought came into her own mind. It was well for Marietta that morning that the thought came without the means. As it was, if wishes could poison, she was dead already. No rival is so hateful as a benefactress, because she cannot be hated with a good conscience—rivalry takes the guise of ingratitude, and ingratitude itself is hardly distinguishable from hatred.

Marietta looked at Gretchen strangely when the coffee was brought to her bed-side.

"Why what in the world is the matter with you?" she asked. "You look as if you had seen all the ghosts in Vienna."

"Nothing."

"That's not the way to say nothing, Gretchen. You look as if all your blood had turned to tears, and had lost the way out. You have a head-ache; I can feel your head throbbing as if it was my own. Oh, Gretchen, don't get ill again, please—what on earth should I do without you?"

"Oh, I'm not ill. You're a great deal too good to me."

"Why, what do you mean? I'm never good to anybody. I rather prefer being cruel and unkind. There's that Englishman of mine, for instance; I'm sure I lead him the life of a dog. He follows me up and down like my own shadow, and can't get away, though I do nothing but snub him; it is simply delightful, especially making him jealous. It's as good as having a pet bear."

"What a baby!" thought Gretchen, scornfully. "And to think a man, with broad shoulders and strong arms, should put up with being made a plaything of—why even he could see the difference between us; no, she has no more heart than a wax doll in the shop-windows, and he sees it as well as I. Marietta?"

"Gretchen?"

"You really don't care for Herr Maynard?"

"*Mon Dieu!* He won't let me. I only wish he would."

"It seems to me he tries hard enough."

"Gretchen, when you're as old as I am, you'll find out what fools men are. Why, he's never even let me be jealous of him. If I vex him, he only gets miserable and grumbles; if he would only scold or throw the chairs at my head, that would be something: but how can I care for a man who only puts his tail between his legs and sulks? It's his own fault if he tempts a girl to show her tempers. I'm inclined to talk this morning; shall I tell you a secret, Gretchen? Well, I did once think I cared for him a little. It was once when I was worse to him than usual, and he turned, and told me he would have me whether I chose or no. Didn't I give him a scolding for it!—he kept away for days, and that made me want him back again. I was just beginning to think of giving in, when he spoiled it all by coming back without calling. That was the time when you first came down-stairs. Oh, and there was one other time, that was when it came into my head that he seemed to take very kindly to my turning him over to you."

Every word of her chatter was a stab to Gretchen, the concluding jest felt like a mortal blow. But this was not to be all.

Herr Maynard himself called, and Marietta, as if following up her whim of giving herself a little jealous pastime, that is to say, of playing with edged tools, chose to snub him more, and to turn him over to Gretchen even earlier than usual.

The Englishman lost no time.

"Well, my dear girl," he asked her, "have you thought over what I asked you? But what's the matter? you don't look yourself to-day.

"I am though—quite myself again—thank you, though, for asking."

There must have been some under-tone of sarcasm in her commonplace words, for even he, self-enwrapped as he was, observed them. No wonder her accent was inconsistent with her words; after breaking her heart, to be asked carelessly by the breaker after the health of the pieces was a little too hard to bear.

"You look awfully ill, though. I suppose that considerate Marietta of ours has been dragging you about till she has knocked you up. But have you been thinking? Of course you have, that's a good girl. Have you said anything to Marietta?"

"Not a word."

"And when do you mean to begin?"

Since her morning's talk with Marietta, a new frenzy had come upon her. In spite of her moral despair, she had not been proof against the thought of wealth, which had been her first love, even the only substitute for the love of her mother Nature, who had doled out to her kreuzers for kisses. But golden cement could not heal her heart: mending was of no use unless the cup could be made to hold some kind of wine. She knew that Herr Maynard could not spend his whole life-time in picking up Marietta's crumbs. Marietta, if she did not marry him, would be sure to end in marrying somebody, and even if she married nobody, she must expect to lose both youth and beauty in the course of years, and

these, as Gretchen felt, were the sole chains by which her lover could possibly be bound. And then what would happen? Gretchen would lose even the miserable privilege of seeing the man whom she loved in so wild a fashion, of hearing the voice which formed her heart's food, even the yet more miserable joy of self-torment in watching his devotion to another. If passion could not be satisfied, it must feed on itself: next to the enjoyment of food was the luxury of hunger, for hunger means hope, and while these three, Marietta, Gretchen, and Herr Maynard, remained together all things remained possible. I think most women will understand the sort of inconsistent consistency that led her to prefer the crowning despair of bringing about a marriage between her lover and her direct rival to the barren conclusion of having nothing to do with the direction of his fate, and letting him drift into a world of strange women with whom neither she nor her rival had anything in common. And then another matter must not be forgotten. If she had become Marietta's mistress, Herr Maynard had become her own master, not by any merits of his own, but simply because he was he and she was she. How could she, any more than Zelda in after days, evolve camels of morality and right reason from the depths of her moral consciousness when she had no moral consciousness from which to evolve them? She would have been the man's second or tenth wife if he pleased, now that the hope of full and complete love was gone, and have obeyed him to the extent of trying to get him the moon if he asked for it, even if the moon were her rival. And then there was the last desperate thought of all—that he might be pleased into kindness by her eagerness to gratify him always and anyhow. It was all a strange compound of greed, passion, jealousy, and the craving for self-torture that belongs to unreasoning passion. But though the total was strange, each item in the compound was as natural as love and avarice themselves.

Yet though her soul was confused her mind was clear. She had not read volumes of love philosophy—mostly of the morbid sort—for nothing, and Marietta's frank confession of the morning had taught her over-quick wits a great many things.

"Promise me," she said, "that everything I tell you shall be secret, even from Marietta?"

"That's right—nothing like confidence between friends. There's my hand." She took it, and he felt her's tremble.

"You don't know Marietta." Suddenly her heart gave a leap—a bold thought, brimful of hope, sprung up in her like a sudden sunrise. Even if it failed she would still enjoy a season of Fool's Paradise, and that would be better than to be banished into the cold without even having played at dreaming out her dream. "You don't know women," she went on.

"Don't I, though—to my cost too. But perhaps you're right. I certainly don't follow the cards this game."

"I've never come across one of you men yet," she answered, from her

behind-the-scenes experience, "who didn't think he knew women; and I've never known one who wasn't wrong. Do you know you might marry Marietta to-morrow morning if you pleased?"

"Then I do please."

"Do you think a girl like that, with everybody at her feet, cares for a man who's just like all the rest—who'd let her box his ears without a word? You know women, indeed! You don't deserve for me to tell you what to do."

"Dearest Gretchen! Tell me—never mind letting me into the secrets—I only want Marietta, and then I'll keep them like a father confessor."

"It isn't much good telling you though. Why, I don't believe you could keep away from her an hour. If you could——"

"Confound it, that's just it. I see what you mean, but it's no good. Hang her, I should only sneak back again like a beaten cur. I've done it before."

"And you call yourself a man!"

"No, I don't. I call myself a fool."

"Why, if I loved, and keeping away would give me a chance, I'd hide away for twenty years."

"Wait till you do love somebody, Gretchen—you'll know better then."

"Very well, then—I meant to help you, that's all. But there's no helping a man who boasts of being a fool—and a coward besides."

Calling oneself a fool and being called one are not quite the same thing; and to be called coward by a woman is not pleasant even for a brave man, especially when the word is used by a lip that does not try to hide its curl. Gretchen was really beginning to despise the man she loved without loving him the less—and that is the seventh depth below Acheron.

"Gretchen!" he said, with a black scowl. "You're enough to provoke a saint—and I'm neither saint nor coward. What is it you want me to do?"

"Oh, I didn't mean you wouldn't fight anybody. But what I call a coward is a man who likes to be a slave. Marietta thinks so too. But if you can't help yourself, there's one other way. Pretend to care about somebody else—she's heard of jealousy, I suppose, but she wants to be taught what it means. She wants a master—not a slave like you."

"I won't have you call me coward, Gretchen. Yes, you're right, I know. I'll let her see that I'm not to be trifled with any longer—it would be glorious if I could only make her feel anything through that cold skin of hers—jealousy, anything. I'll flirt with every ballet girl in Vienna before her eyes."

"Just as though she wouldn't see through it as well as I! No, no—you mustn't flirt, you must make love, and not to everybody, but to one. You must put her on the rack every day, every hour. You must pretend to hang about her a little too—she must think you are trying to hide that

you don't care for her any more. You are a bad actor—all the better. If you were a good one I should say pretend to be a bad one."

"It's a good idea," he said, walking up and down. "I've thought of it before. By Jove, Gretchen, you are a clever girl! Why one would think you were as old as Eve, to have a head like yours on your shoulders. Yes I'll do it—she wants a master, does she? Then she shall find one—so here goes: who shall it be?"

Gretchen half hoped that he himself would say the word, upon such a straw of mock happiness was it that she had come to cling. But he only went on walking up and down, with a look of eager sullenness on his open, florid face that ought to have made her ask herself if even mock happiness could be possible with him. As usual, however, it was not the real Herr Maynard that she loved, but the ideal that she had turned into a cloak for his broad shoulders, and the deep voice that might have belonged to any man as well as he.

"Let's see—who shall it be?" he went on. "There's that Italian girl; what's her name—I know they hate each other like poison, or there's——"

"What are you thinking of? Can't you see the girl ought to be your friend?"

"Why—you mean yourself? By Jove, Gretchen, if you don't take care, it'll end in the real thing! Haven't I said a hundred times that a hundred Mariettas wouldn't make one you? That smooths everything—to make hot love to somebody who believed it, and whom one didn't care for, would certainly have been a bore. But with you—here goes to begin with," and he threw both his arms round her and kissed her face at random. "There—that's earnest of a double thousand pounds on the very day we win."

Poor Gretchen had not bargained for such an earnest, and the miserable mockery of what she had brought on herself made her tear herself from him and fly as she would have flown from herself, had that been possible. The kiss felt as if it had left a brand upon her; in one moment she seemed to have lived and loved more intensely than could ever be the fate of Marietta in a life-time. The embrace alone had been worth the buying, though it was nothing more in truth than the first touch of two thousand pounds.

Marietta's wits were not so quick as those of the pupil of hunger and thirst, but her heart was a great deal quicker—so quick indeed that it had never yet given itself time to get fairly down to the bottom of any well of feeling or to stand still in any one spot for more than a moment: it was in truth as nimble as her heels, and to describe her life as *coquetterie* would be less accurate than to call it mental and moral *pirouetterie*. To catch her was a true butterfly chase, and not the straight, heavy trampling after her which had been the fascinated Englishman's sole notion of moth-stalking.

She admired and believed in Gretchen, however, so implicitly that it

was strange she had not been jealous of her before: if she really cared about Herr Maynard, in her heart of hearts, as her treatment of him would naturally lead those who judge women by the rule of contraries to suppose, she ought to have felt she was playing a rash game in encouraging his intimacy with one whom she felt to be her own superior. But then her childlike trust of her *protégée* was so intense that suspicion was simply impossible. Had she caught Gretchen in a flagrant act of treachery she would only have stared and disbelieved her own senses. Her heart, judged from Gretchen's stand-point, might be a very light and tiny one, but every scruple of it was of the purest gold—not a confused mass of every sort of alloy like the more intense nature of the Cornflower.

And yet she felt her light heart begin to grow heavy when she could not help seeing that somehow her power was beginning to wane. She would have been blind had she not found out that a confidence was established between her friend and her lover in which she had no share—from which, indeed, she was excluded. They might be playing at love, but the game became singularly like the real thing. Gretchen was making the very utmost of her time and of her power. It is, of course, impossible to describe the progress of a conspiracy into which so many complex elements entered and which depended for its conduct upon hourly trifles. Droppings and pickings up of fans, the comparative merits of bouquets, changes of looks and tones, belong to language not to be written in words—a volume would be required to enter into the whole psychology of raising a pocket-handkerchief when the smallest element enters that does not belong to simple courtesy. For a long time Maynard proved indocile: he acted his part with such consummate badness that the greatest of actors could not have equalled him in the representation of the waverer who begins to suspect himself of inconstancy and tries his hardest not to yield. Every now and then Gretchen loosened the rein, so that the climax she feared might not arrive too suddenly. But she kept him to his task, until his intimacy with her became a habit even more real than his devotion to Marietta. If he had not been incapable of combining love with respect, it is not unlikely that Gretchen's stratagem would have ended in triumph. Even as things were, it seemed quite possible that she had laid her plans too well—that without gaining him to herself she would lose him to her friend.

But, however long she might put it off, the climax was at last bound to come. Maynard was falling into an enraging state of placid and easy-going content with the situation: Marietta was growing pettish and peevish, and Gretchen was living in a state of continual fever.

One day Marietta made some remark on Gretchen's looks, but not in quite so kind a voice as before.

"I think you're losing all your good looks," was the way she put it this time. Gretchen only smiled, however; the accusation was in itself the winning of a skirmish. But she only answered, "And you get more and more beautiful every day."

"No, I'm not—I'm getting hideous. I'm getting tired of Vienna. I hate dancing—was one only made to twirl round first on one foot and then on the other?"

Then Gretchen knew that the climax was come. She drew herself together, for she felt it to be the eve of battle over the man who was at that moment trying to beat Von Geierstein at *écarté*, and failing ignominiously. But then it was true he could afford to lose.

Marietta was very provoked indeed, not with anything that had been said or not said, done or not done, but with everything. Any thing might have been the immediate cause—perhaps her coffee had been too sweet or cold. Still that was no reason why she should have chosen that opportunity rather than any other for saying,

"Gretchen—what is it you and Herr Maynard are hiding from me?"

"Hiding?"

"Yes—hiding. I can see there's something going on that I'm not to know. How red you turn! Oh, Gretchen, Gretchen! To think you should have fallen in love with that man!"

"I—in love—Marietta!"

"No—don't call me Marietta. Yes, do, though—we are a pair of wretched girls together. How could you help it more than I? There—I don't mind saying that I love him—I'm proud of it now. Why don't you say a word? Are you ashamed?"

"My poor Marietta!" said the younger to the elder girl, almost with the air of a mother to her child: "What can you know about love?"

Marietta was used to her protection, but was not used to being instructed.

"Which means you know more than me. Perhaps you do, then. Oh, I can bear it—how long have you understood one another?"

"Why can't you believe me? There is no understanding—there is nothing to understand."

"No—I don't believe you. You love him, even if he doesn't love you. Can't I see it in your cheeks and eyes? Are we not of the same people—can we not read each other in the same way? Oh, Gretchen—tell me if we are still to be sisters, or if I am to hate you all the rest of my days—if he loves you I must hate you—I must and will."

The tears were beginning to run from the poor girl's eyes as she poured out her quick and contradictory ejaculations of affection that wandered backwards and forwards between her lover and her rival, now running into pique and now into simple sorrow. She had never been seen to shed a tear over anything but trifles till now, and Gretchen's heart began to open under the unexpected shower.

"Oh, I wish you had never seen me!" she exclaimed suddenly, in a tone of passion far beyond the reach of Marietta's April soul, and that astonished her with its vehemence. "Why did you not let me die on the pavement, instead of lifting me up and making me live to be a curse to you?"

"I lifted you up to make you love me," said Marietta, simply, speaking not quite the truth, but very nearly. She had taken her from the streets merely out of her good heart: but the motive she gave herself was not long in coming after. "And what wrong have you done? How can you help loving—how can you, or any woman that was ever born?"

What wrong, indeed, had she done? But her having done no harm could not prevent her feeling that in heart she had been guilty of a thousand hopes and thoughts and wishes each, in spirit, more black and treacherous than any outward deed could be. Even now she felt herself capable of betraying her benefactress to death itself, if it would enable her to turn her mock triumph into the real triumph of a single hour. How could she not feel herself guilty of a cruel though nameless and, as yet, barren wrong? She was but engaged in trying to bring together two people who loved one another—had she been a self-analyst, she would have dignified her course with the name of self-sacrifice, and perhaps have consoled herself with the spiritual self-conceit of virtue. She, however, was not philosopher enough to have found the process of turning base metal into spurious gold. She knew herself, without enquiry, to have become everything ignoble—ungrateful, sordid, selfish: and though she might be doing no wrong, the wrong was there. Her old worship of Marietta had given her a faith and a conscience, and she knew herself to be faithless to both with open eyes. She even took a certain pride in making herself out to be all that was base for passion's sake, by way of revenge upon Nature for having made her all that was wretched.

But Herr Maynard's game at *écarté* had now come to an end. As he hated losing anything, he was by no means in the best of tempers when the force of habit led him to the door, behind which two women were condescending to make themselves unhappy for the sake of his big voice, broad shoulders, frank eyes, and sullen scowl. Besides, he had been touched roughly in a sore place.

"Herr Maynard," said the Lieutenant, "I shall end by being disappointed in you. We trusted to you to bring *la Romani* down—we thought we Viennese were going to see what an Englishman could do. And *Per Bacco*, as we used to say in Venice, if you're a bit better than me, or any other poor devil who has no *bonnes fortunes* to speak of. Thank you—yes, it's quite right: a thousand. You shall take your revenge any time you please. But, as I was saying, you're no better than anybody else—you've got to put up with the *femme de chambre*, and not an over pretty one to my mind. But *de gustibus non est disputandum*."

"Mind your own business, Herr Lieutenant. Don't be too sure—those laugh that win."

"But you've been long enough about it to take Ehrenbreitstein."

"Look here, Lieutenant—I let you off my revenge if you'll give me odds that the fortress doesn't fall in three days."

"Three days! Why I'd take it myself in three days, if I cared to try. A place that holds out twenty minutes isn't worth a siege to my

thinking, when there are so many that don't hold out five. But *de gustibus* again. Make it two days, and say done: and you shall have your revenge all the same."

It was in this mood of ill temper at a loss, pique at the depreciation of his woman-killing fame, and with a test wager on his hands, that he came to make his daily call upon the two girls. If the Lieutenant had been behind the scenes before he came, he would hardly have been so willing to take the wager—and yet, perhaps, he would; for he generally managed to be the winner when accounts were settled.

As soon as the Englishman entered the room, Marietta, despite the deepened scowl on his forehead, strode or rather sprang towards him, seized him by the hand, and brought him face to face with Gretchen.

"There," she said, with the short, quick stamp of her foot on the floor, "tell me which you love best—her or me?"

This was a way out of the complication that not the most skilful of knot-makers could have foreseen or provided for. As usual, unthinking impulse was master of the situation; nor was Herr Maynard himself more astonished at the open boldness of this sudden appeal than Gretchen. And yet what she felt was not all bewilderment. What if the answer should actually be what she had hoped to make it become with a few weeks more time? Was it not quite on the cards that the Englishman might be less willing to give up his friend and counsellor than the mere summer queen of his fancy? She hung like Minerva upon the looks of this modern Paris, in whose hands the golden apple was already poised.

Of course the hope was as vain as Minerva's own had been. If Maynard had been piqued into betting that he would cut off his right hand, he would have been as faithful to the wager as a saint to a vow. There are hundreds to whom the loss of a wager upon which depends their whole hardly won reputation for woman conquest would be the loss of all the honour they are capable of understanding, and Maynard was one of them.

Still, he need not have kicked over his ladder quite so carelessly. He might have discovered by this time that Gretchen's aid in bringing matters to their climax was insufficiently paid with two thousand or even two hundred thousand pounds. He might have thrown her one look of gratitude as she burst from the room rather than hear the answer that, after the first instant, she could read in the very air that parted him and her.

This is how a chain of the merest chances, too slight and subtle to be set out one by one, had crushed, while yet in the bud, what might, had one or two accidents differed ever so slightly, have developed into a grander soul than is often permitted to blossom even under care and culture. Thenceforth, had she cared for anything but the gold of the apple, she would have been more than human. Even as things were, there was another phase yet to come.

CHAPTER X.

MISERRIMA.

THE Old Wharf-Side was still unchanged, even down to its minutest details. Mrs. Goldrick was still looking for the lost key. It was at all events an object in life for her, if nothing more. How she lived, or even existed, all those days and nights is perhaps conceivable by those who have been at the pains to make enquiry into the ways and means of the solitary rats of the human sewers. Her sleep was perhaps scarcely worth speaking of, being a mere bundle of dreams. Her food was of two kinds, bodily and spiritual, the bodily being easily described. First she came to the end of her bread, then to the end of the small amount of ready cash that Aaron had left her, then to the end of her wine that had given her fictitious strength, and then to the end of Aaron's brandy, that had given her very actual fever. Then followed the strange spectacle of a witch and miser visiting the pawn-shops and raising upon her household rubbish anything that the man at the counter might be pleased to give her. At last, however, every nook and corner was left bare, and herself left almost without clothes. The windows lost their blinds, and such was the spectacle of her poverty that her reputation of miser, combined with such an appearance of utter destitution, gave ample ground for the children who fearfully peeped in to set a report going that she must be rolling in gold. The apparent poverty of a reputed miser is a better foundation for credit than any amount of luxury—people have been told "all is not gold that glitters" until they have come to believe all that does not glitter to be gold. It could only have been her other reputation for witchcraft that saved her from burglary, and, even so, she was watched by many a curious pair of eyes. Then, when she reached the pass of being thought able to buy up all St. Bavons, she was driven for at least four-and-twenty hours to live literally upon nothing but air.

How many people who read of hunger know what hunger really means? Perhaps a good appetite may be better worth having even than good food; but not even a chameleon could be expected to admit that the very best of appetites without food is equal in value to the very worst with some prospect of satisfaction before appetite changes into hunger. Mrs. Goldrick had arrived at the fourth stage. She had passed the first state of balked appetite in which the healthy desire for meat fades away into a faint craving for stimulant. She had gone through the state of collapse after which comes a period of repose from all wish for food, when the patient feels as if life needed no fuel but what is self-supplied. This season of apparently self-sustained strength had lasted unusually long with her, but she had in due course passed into the third stage, when hunger woke again, not in the form of an appetite but of a passion. The fourth was the wolf-stage, when the wild-beast starts up, and the human spirit

is no longer responsible for the workings of instinct. Her existence—it can be called her life no longer—became almost too hideous for narration. With a treasure-box before her eyes that only needed the turn of a skeleton key to make her a rich woman, she transformed herself into as much a beast of prey as her miserable hunting ground allowed. Her rent had been paid up to the last quarter, so her search was not likely to be disturbed for the present, and her desert island was still her own hunting ground for some time to come. It is horrible to describe the shifts to which she was driven, and the temptations to which, rather than betray her self-imposed trust, she allowed herself to yield. There was a large tortoise-shell cat, persecuted by the children of the Old Wharf-side, who was in the habit of creeping down into the cellars at ebb-tide for food and shelter. One day it fell upon the unusual good fortune of finding a rat too small and feeble to shew fight, for the rats ran large in the neighbourhood of Zelda's fortune. The poor creature was already half killed by the hungry cat when the yet more hungry woman caught sight of the unequal battle. It was not from any sentimental desire to protect the weak that a sudden impulse made her send the cat flying to the other end of the cellar with one of her pattens after it. There was a great corporation dinner at St. Bavons that evening, but no turtle was enjoyed with greater zest than was Mrs. Goldrick's solitary supper. Not only was her gnawing hunger appeased for a time, but this struggle with even the gutter cats for their prey had given her an idea. Before she laid down that night she had invented a rat-trap, with all the skill and craft of necessity.

Thus much for her bodily food. For spiritual food she was as well off as ever. The more her physical strength failed, the more her craze grew into definite certainty that Zelda was still alive. She could not for a moment entertain the thought that she had sacrificed her life to a shadow, and the greater were the pains of sacrifice, the less it seemed possible that they were thrown away.

And so this was, so far, the end of the Cornflower. If she had, as she believed, succeeded in betraying her good angel into the most miserable of all miserable marriages, she had certainly crowded all the wasted strength of her nature into one life-long effort after expiation. When it was found that the husband of her friend and mistress had already an heir by a first unhappy wife, her duty was obvious—she removed it from the way. When Squire Maynard's ruin was imminent, her duty was also clear—to use her increasing influence over him and his affairs, and rob him right and left in order to make provision for Marietta's child. When the pedlar Aaron made her and her reputed savings the price of his recovering for her the stolen darling whom Marietta had left to her keeping, she, in her criminal ignorance of those English laws which everyone is assumed to have at his fingers' ends by intuition, did not think twice of herself—self had become nothing to her long ago. After so much it would have been strange indeed if she had given up her life's

object, however irrational it may seem to the majority of us other shadow-hunters, in order to exchange a diet of rats for a crust of bread and cheese. Her inheritance was Zelda, the child of the more than mother whom she herself, as she thought, had betrayed and destroyed, and she was not one to sell it for a mess of pottage. As for her own child, Mr. Brandt's missing cashier, who had been a good sort of son to her before he went under water among the Dutch dykes, she had been proud of him after a fashion, if it was only because he did not squint like his father: but every maternal corner of her heart had been pre-engaged long before he was born. Nothing was more natural than his disappearance—he had come of a roving race, not over regardful of legal honesty, and was no doubt on his legs somewhere. When she had seen his name advertised on the hand-bills, she only assumed that he had somehow managed to better himself at exceptional expense to the Gorgios, and returned to look for her key, thankful that her marriage with Aaron had not burdened her with domestic complications and interruptions. Possibly, in another rank of life, she would have set to hunt for her key on the floor of a mad-house; nor is it altogether pleasant to think how often the only possible mental and moral groove permitted to a special temperament by special circumstances may be taken by those who profess and call themselves sane as proof of madness. She knew what she was about, and, according to her lights, set about it in what she thought was the straightest and most appropriate way to succeed, without turning to the right or left, or yielding one inch of herself even to the attacks of hunger—that fiercest enemy wherewith moral strength can be called on to contend. Since these are generally taken as the clearest proofs of the soundest sanity, she ought not to be charged even with monomania. She was supremely in earnest, supremely steadfast, supremely ignorant of the banking system, and nothing more.

If she could only set her eyes on the Zelda whom she knew not even by name, and have surrendered the old chest into the hands of her for whose sake she still carried on the trade of miser, she would have joyfully sung the *Nunc Dimittis* which had for years been the sole canticle of Hope to her soul. After so long a vigil nothing could be looked for but a long sleep, which to her meant the welcome end of all things. The thought of dying before her watch was over was so bitter as to seem impossible. Though the days slipped by and made her grow older and older, as if they were so many years, her absorption in her mission rendered her as deaf and blind to the course of time as though past, present, and future were terms without meaning or difference. Her mental backward journey to Vienna was as real as her present penance, and neither was less real than must be her absolution before she died. Meanwhile, to her superstitious temper, everything depended on the finding of the key.

She searched so carefully as to leave no spot in the cellar unfingered. She counted the bricks, and felt over and round them one by one three times over, tearing up every weed and probing every crevice and rat-hole.

The frogs, toads, and all other loathsome natives of the place looked upon her as so entirely naturalised, that they only sat and stared at her, even when she transformed herself into a cat for the sake of their meat. She, in turn, became so used to their ways, that their splashings and scramblings were a relief to her solitude. But though she became at home with them more than any unwilling prisoner could possibly be, she had been cut off from human sounds for so long that the softest whisper, if it differed from the persistent baby voice that never left her ears, would have startled and jarred upon her more than all the strange noises of her splashing and scrambling companions. And it was not by any means a soft whisper that at the end of her third day of rat-trapping called "Mag!" down the cellar staircase.

Not that the voice was intended to be anything but eminently soft and persuasive. "Mag!" it called out again, "are you always down there among the coals? Come up and give me some brandy—but be still for your life: things are a little queer with me just now. I've knifed a nobleman, and the Chokengros are after me, so I've just looked in to keep you company for a day or two till things are quiet again—they won't look for me here, and you may as well let me have that thousand pounds."

Her heart sank down: what was to become of her with her husband coming to claim free quarters in her empty house, and with her key still unfound? But before she had time to answer a loud knock sounded at the street door.

Aaron Goldrick ran back along the passage, and no doubt made use of some convenient chink to reconnoitre such a strange event as a visitor to the most deserted house in all St. Bavons. At any rate he soon ran back with his teeth chattering almost audibly, nor did he pause as before at the head of the cellar, but came down headlong to the verge of the pool.

"Mag, you old witch, there's always a something whenever I come here. Here's a man, a detective, I'll lay my thousand to all your bare boards. Go up and tell him all the lies you can think of, there's an angel. I can't step into all that slime, or I'd lie behind your coals."

"You coward. Stay where you are, then—I'll go and see."

"Is there no back way out? Can't one get to the river?"

"None. You must make the best of it there, unless you want to slip down and lie there till the tide comes up and drowns you—supposing you're meant to be drowned."

"Get rid of him any way—tell him——"

"I'll tell him what I please." So she waded back to the steps, put on her most stony manner, and opened the door as she had done to Claudia on Whitmonday—the last human being, save Aaron, who had dared to seek the witch in her den. Her heart which had sunk down at the unexpected arrival of her husband, rose up again above its dead level: since nothing was so extraordinary as a knock at her door, it must presage something more extraordinary than the visit of a policeman, and there

was but one thing that with her could be the subject of any presentiment or presage.

* * * * *

Something so extraordinary happened to me a day after my half quarrel with Lord Lisburn that I gave up astonishment at anything thenceforth and for ever. I had just read in the *Trumpet* that monstrous rumour of the forthcoming marriage between Lord Lisburn and the girl whom I had now come to hate with a sort of fascination. I cannot wonder at myself even now for beginning to think her influence savoured of the supernatural—indeed I was not only beginning to think it, I had come to feel it, in spite of my sober reason. But it was not this that surprised me: Zelda was clearly as invincible as fate, and if she had set her heart upon marrying me instead of Lord Lisburn, I had no doubt but that she would only have had to command, and I should have obeyed. I could hardly bear to think of it all, however, little as I was surprised: and to this day I cannot tell whether my disgust arose simply from shame on behalf of my friend and patron, or simply from a feeble rebellion of my reason against the overwhelming mastery of the beggar girl, or whether it arose from both of these combined with a touch of jealousy. If she was to be the arbitress of my destiny it would have been some bitter satisfaction to feel that she chose to be the arbitress of mine alone.

I had hardly digested this piece of news, and had come to the conclusion that whether Lord Lisburn sailed to the Pole or no, I must henceforth resign duties that would keep me in the daily presence of the future mistress of the *Esmeralda*, when the maid-of-all-work who waited on me at my lodgings entered and brought me a letter directed in a strange hand. I had once before spoken to myself of something being as impossible as if I should ever turn out to be a murderer or a millionaire. Now, to me, the possession of a thousand pounds would have answered all the practical purposes of a million: and the envelope, plainly addressed to myself, and without a word of explanation, contained bank-notes to the amount of exactly a thousand pounds. I had never seen so much money in my life before: it was as if the Bank of England had turned into a cloud and burst over my head. At first I thought it some blunder, but gradually a suspicion dawned upon me that made me, though alone, colour up with shame. That Carol was acquainted with the Brandts he had told me the first time I had ever met him: that he chattered about everybody to everybody, I knew—what was more likely than that he had been talking about me and my destitution in the quarter where, least in the world, I would have my name, far less my poverty, even whispered? It was just the cold-blooded kind of thing that was strictly appropriate to Claudia; she was just the girl, I thought, to destroy a man's life for him, and then console him by not allowing his body to starve. Not one of the notes would I touch though I were reduced to take all my meals at coffee stalls; I would let myself fall to a siege diet of rats and mice before letting myself accept such an insult in the name of charity.

The only question was, how to return them. It would not do to put them into the post—it was just possible I might be mistaken. At last, after much meditation, a brilliant thought came into my head. I would run down to St. Bavon's itself, and ask my lawyer acquaintance there to consult Miss Brandt, as a well-known supporter of public and private charities, to what institution in St. Bavon's she would advise a client of his to make a donation of a thousand pounds. If she understood the question, she would be sure to betray herself in some way: if she did not, it would be time for me to make farther enquiries and to seek less delicate means of showing her what I thought of such a gift. I do not know if I hit upon the best course to follow, but it was the only one I could think of, nor did the next morning alter the conclusion of the evening.

There was nothing to keep me in town for two clear days; and, thanks to the *Trumpet* and my own rigid economy, I could spare the money as well as the time. I was on the point of setting out, when Lord Lisburn, to my shame—a shame of which I was ashamed—called for the first time to be a witness of my wretched lodgings, and of the poverty which I chose, so far as I could, to keep concealed from all men.

I do not think he was uncourteous enough to seem to observe—that was not the way of the truest gentleman whom I ever knew. But that I felt and looked confused is certain, and my false shame did me no good in after days. How clearly every instant of that day is imprinted on my mind—how strangely every word, every gesture, every look, seemed to work together as if in a conspiracy to bring about the most fatal chain of circumstance that ever, without any apparent fault, contrived to place one mortal at the utter mercy of another. Do we ever sufficiently notice how, to produce any event, however slight—not only the destinies of wars and kingdoms, but the wearing of a coat or the spilling of a cup of tea—there must have gone a special train of circumstances, beginning with the beginning of the world; births, deaths, marriages, looks, thoughts, words, gestures, times and places, and a thousand other things, without every one of which, combined with and following one another in one definite and invariable way, the fortune of war would have been reversed and the tea would not have been spilled? I am not a fatalist, because I have witnessed, if I have never exercised, the full power of will, before which circumstance went down like grass before the scythe. But I can fully sympathize with those who hold that the sequence and combination of all things could not have been otherwise—that the human will itself is but a circumstance, seeing how much it depends for its very existence, and therefore for its exercise, upon temperament, which is the result of birth and breeding, and upon opportunity—upon matters which take away from the will itself all attributes of independent power.

This is a long digression into the mysteries of philosophy to be suggested by my stupid mortification at having to receive a peer of the

realm at my own home—if so sacred a word can be used in connection with such terms as Two-pair back and Solitude.

"I have come to ask you a favour, Vaughan," he said. "You know the news, of course—confound those cads, who won't even let a man have the credit of being the first to tell his own story. I'm afraid, somehow, we didn't part as good friends as we ought—I was angry, I own, and was in the right besides—but you couldn't expect to know Pauline so well as I. Well, I like to be straightforward and do things right off, and so do you, I suppose. I want you to be friends with Pauline—do you understand? There's not another man whom I'd insult Pauline by asking such a thing, but you've saved my life twice, you know; you can't throw me over, and if you're my friend you must be Pauline's too. Poor girl! I must get her all the friends I can."

I could scarcely help smiling at the craving of a man who professed to despise the world for someone to stand by him. Besides, I had made up my mind that, whatever Zelda might be to me, she could never be my friend. But I was touched by his frankness and gratitude, and by the delicacy with which he tried to explain that, if he had to choose between Zelda and me, he was now bound by stronger ties than those of friendship and gratitude. I could not find it in my heart to say, "Then you must choose Zelda:" I only said, lightly,

"They say, my lord, when a man marries he says adieu to his friends—I hope, though you are going to the North Pole, you will only say *au revoir* to yours."

Even this innocent speech was another link in the chain.

"Not even *au revoir* to you. By the way, you seem off on a journey, to judge from the look of your portmanteau."

"Oh, only for a few days."

"'H. Vaughan, St. Bavons,'" he said, reading my label. "By the way, what sort of place is St. Bavons? I have a reason for asking."

"Very large, and very hideous—chiefly celebrated for turtle, back streets, and Quakers."

"By Jove! the bonnets like coal-scuttles!" He thought for a moment, and said,

"By the way, if you come across a policeman, or anybody who is likely to know the holes and corners of the town—if there is a 'Royal Arms,' and an 'Old Point Hotel,'——"

"Of course there are: at least, close by. Why?"

"It is the place, then. Then you can find some chance of asking, without saying why, if there's an old gipsy woman, or some such person, known as Queen Margaret; she's said to be a witch who coins gold, which sounds like a human curiosity, anyhow—if you're interested in such things."

"This has to do with Zelda," I thought, "though it's putting the cart before the horse to commit oneself first and to enquire afterwards." I certainly did not care to meddle any longer in the affair, seeing that

to bring back pleasant news I knew to be impossible, while if I brought back unpleasant news I should be sure to have my motives misconstrued. I made up my mind, however, that I would take the hint, for the sake of my own growing interest in all that regarded Zelda, and was about to satisfy him by saying yes, when, as luck would have it, my landlady came into the room, and, without regarding the presence of a third person, requested that I would pay her my single week's arrears before I went away. The demand was made in so peremptory a manner, that no-one could help seeing her opinion of the value of my credit—indeed, I was obliged to live in such hand to mouth fashion that, though I was angry, I was not surprised. Anger was useless, however—I opened my purse, and found myself obliged to give up my journey: to squeeze out both fare and rent was impossible. I was so annoyed that Lord Lisburn could not fail to see my embarrassment, while its cause must have been equally obvious.

"What a forgetful brute I am," he said, when the woman left the room. "One thing I came for was to let you have a cheque for your salary in advance, as surgeon to the *Esmeralda*." I knew he had not come for any such purpose, and I had no intention of drawing pay for duties that I had very little intention of performing.

"Well, my Lord, you see how things are. We'll talk of my salary afterwards—meanwhile, I must plead guilty to wanting a loan of five pounds, or even two."

Lord Lisburn stared a very little—it was to him as though I had asked for a loan of five pence. He said nothing, and handed me ten: and in another hour I was on my road to St. Bavons once more.

The next morning I learned for the first time of the ruin of the house of Brandt and Company—so it could not have been from Claudia's hands that I had received the mysterious thousand pounds. As I left my friend's office I met my other acquaintance, the curate, whom I disliked, but whom, as versed in the affairs of all the old women, rich and poor, in St. Bavons, I made a point of accosting.

"If you are looking for a real heathen, such as you say," he told me, "I should think you must mean that Mrs. Goldrick, in Old Wharf Side; she is the pest of St. Catherine's—not that she ever does much harm, but her life is an evil. She is the only one of my flock who ever baffled me."

"You forget that I also was a parishioner of St. Catherine's," I could not help saying, rather maliciously, "So perhaps your two black sheep may suit one another." And so, with my mind full of Claudia's strange reverse of fortune, I took my way, half out of idleness, half out of curiosity, to the Old Wharf Side.
